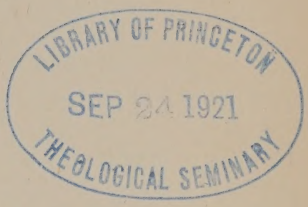
LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
JAN 1 9 2005
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE

CITY TEMPLE PULPIT

THE CITY TEMPLE PULPIT



SERMONS BY THE REV.

JOSEPH PARKER, D.D.

VOLUME VI.

LONDON
HODDER AND STOUGHTON
27, PATERNOSTER ROW
1902

These sermons have been printed from the reporter's notes. Probably not a sentence was written beforehand. This will account for irregularity and roughness, and apparent want of punctuation, in the style. Those who heard the discourses will be able to read them according to the preacher's intention.

Hazell, Watson and Viney, Ld., Printers, London and Aylesbury.

CONTENTS

PAGE

WHAT IS THIS? 2

"What is this that He saith?"—*John* xvi. 18.

THE MAN OF GOD 10

"The man of God."—2 *Tim.* iii. 17.

DIVINE APPOINTMENTS 19

"The time appointed was long."—*Dan.* x. 1.

SEEKING FOR JESUS 30

"Seeking for Jesus."—*John* vi. 24.

TELLING JESUS 40

"His disciples . . . went and told Jesus."—*Matt.* xiv. 12.

FIXING OUR OWN EVIDENCES 49

"That we may see and believe."—*Mark* xv. 32.

VOX CLAMANTIS 62

"What shall I cry?"—*Isaiah* xl. 6.

PAGE

MIXED MOTIVES 72

"Not for Jesus' sake only."—*John* xii. 9.

FULLY AWAKE 84

"When they were fully awake they saw His glory."—*Luke* ix. 32 (R.V.).

ANARCHY 97

"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters."—1 *Peter* iv. 15.

ONE THING, EVERYTHING.. 107

"Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?"—*Mark* iv. 13.

WORTHLESS PRAYERS 118

"Let them not say . . . We have swallowed him up."—*Psalm* xxxv. 25.

NOTHING BUT MIRACLES 126

"They went through the flood on foot."—*Psalm* lxvi. 6.

SACRAMENTAL THOUGHTS 136

"Before I suffer."—*Luke* xxii. 15.

REASONS OF FAILURE 146

"Because of your unbelief."—*Matt.* xvii 20.

THROUGH THE MATERIAL TO THE SPIRITUAL 157

"But the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow."—*Isaiah* xvii. 11.

PAGE

RELIGION MADE EASY 165

"It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem." – 1 *Kings* xii. 28.

GOD IN HUMAN LIFE 175

"I took thee from the sheepcote."—1 *Chron.* xvii. 7.

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE 183

"How then doth David in spirit?"—*Matt.* xxii. 43.

SEEKING JESUS 194

"I know that ye seek Jesus."—*Matt.* xxviii. 5.

THY GOD THY GLORY 204

"Thy God thy glory."—*Isaiah* lx. 19.

WATER FROM THE FOUNTAIN 214

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation."—2 *Peter* i. 20.

MAN SUCCEEDING MAN 223

"Reigned in his stead."—1 *Chron.* i. 44.

THE LAW OF EQUIVALENTS 233

"For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise——."—*Eccles.* vii. 22.

SETTING SUNS 242

"When the sun was setting."—*Luke* iv. 40.

PAGE

A BIBLE READING 251

"I would not have you ignorant, brethren."—*Rom.* i. 13.

CONFLICTING FORCES 262

"When Ahab saw Elijah."—1 *Kings* xviii. 17.

SEASONABLE MESSAGES 272

"We spend our years as a tale that is told."—*Psalm* xc. 9.

ALTERNATIVES 280

"To whom shall we go?"—*John* vi. 68.

[*Sunday Morning*, 30*th June*, 1901.]

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thou art revealed unto us as the Beginning and the End, the All-in-all. We worship Thee as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; yet we know not what we say. Our whole heart goes out after Thee, we need Thee; we know this, though we cannot explain it; we must live in God and on God. O Thou who hearest prayer, all nations will hear of Thy hearing and will flock unto Thee with manifold supplication; they are waiting to know who it is that heareth prayer. All time goes up before Thee, seeking eternity; poor, wandering, bewildered Time! It can find no rest but in the years that are at Thy right hand. We come to Thee in the name of Jesus Christ Thy Son, for other name there is none, and He is to us Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last; He must be last, because He was first; otherwise there were two beginnings, and two beginnings there cannot be. We would live and move and have our being in God by our own consent. We must live and move and have our being in God without our consent, for Thou hast fixed all things, and they breathe the breath of eternity; but we would fall into Thy plan with consenting love and singing gratitude; we would not be the subjects of destiny, we would be the children of redeeming Providence. Lord, take us into Thy mighty arms, and may we find our all in Thee through Christ the crucified. Thou hast given us a wondrous life to work out: oh, how beautiful, yet how sad! There seems to be murder in the heart of things; and these great beauteous red roses that fall on the garden-way seem to be but splashes of blood. All things live in blood; we are saved by blood, yea, by the precious blood of Thy Son, Alpha, Omega. We are here representing many experiences, and Thou canst answer them every one; not one shall be sent empty away who comes to Thee in the name of the Son and in the power of the Cross. How strange it all is, how utterly bewildering, and how full of night is the very day! What are these inherent shadows? They are stains upon the beauty of light. Oh that we knew Thee more fully! then should we see better and feel more perfectly the whole music of things. The old man is wondering what the change will be when he parts with his last breath; the young child thinks there is no death, it is all life and laughter and morning and song; the disappointed man thinks of the end, prays for it, cries for it, when his own wife is out of hearing. How sad! how strange! We cannot tell what it is. But there are shining men and great voices and marvellous

visions and apocalypse upon apocalypse, like noon upon noon, until there is naught but light. Yet some of us are taken up with mean things, we are the victims of frivolity; we go where there is no wisdom in the laugh, and we tarry where there is no rest. We have committed ourselves to false issues, we have chattered about eternity, and forgotten it; we have made a problem of the Godhead, and have lost the Cross. To some, life is one long sigh, one heavy sadness; they know not why they were born, and yet they dare not put an end to their own being, which is not their own but God's. For a moment happy, for a whole day in the shadow, snatching at the wrong things, seeking grapes of thorns. God forgive us, for the night is long and the stars are afraid of it and keep out of sight, and the winds are full of moaning. What have we, Thou Lord of heaven and earth, but the Cross, the Blood, the Atonement, the Yea and Amen of the divine oath? Amen.

CLI.

WHAT IS THIS?

"*What is this that He saith?*"—JOHN xvi. 18.

THERE is a discipline in bewilderment. You have not lost religion because you cannot explain it, and you are profited by many a sermon you do not understand. What wild men they are who suppose that everything goes through the channel of the understanding, and that no man is scholarly or learned who does not know five-and-twenty alphabets and all their lore. It is so saddening, so utterly discouraging, for we know a great deal by not knowing it, and especially by knowing that we do not know it. Surely we get some of the very least things through the understanding only. Anything that can be understood is hardly worth understanding; it is only worth understanding as it points towards something beyond in the unmeasured and unscaled height. That is where they who have no religious sentiment or conviction have no standard of values. They do not know whether a thing is high or low. That kind of not-knowledge takes away all standards, confuses the whole universe.

How do you know a thing is high? You only know it because it seems to be higher than something else. But what is that something else? Is it accounted low in some other field or scheme of things? It may be hardly visible from some higher platform. He who has no God has no standard of value, none, because what he accounts value here and now may be no value ten feet higher up. But he who has a conception, a profound conviction of God, and a sincere and simple love for Him, knows how to measure all things under the sun. Said one who had a great knowledge of the unseen and the unseeable, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen," for the things which are seen are time-wise, but the things which are not seen have no time, they burn with eternity. It would be well, therefore, for us to accept some grand conception of God, if it were only to know what time is. Time, so great, swollen with centuries, may be nothing when we come to have some approximate realisation of eternity. If we have nothing but centuries to go by, then there may be long life and great stature and some hint of majesty, but if all we know is a pinpoint on the periphery of the everlasting, where are we?

There is a discipline of bewilderment. The disciples said, We cannot understand this talk: to-day He says something that appears to be very clear, and yet there is a great cloud upon it before we have time to consider what it is. "What is this that He saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again a little while, and ye shall see Me: and, Because I go to the Father? . . . What is this that He saith, A little while? We cannot tell what He saith." To-day we are lost, but in an infinite ocean of truth and love and suggestion.

We should pause here and there in the great teaching of the sweet One, and ask, What does this really mean? We should apply this inquiry to many of the scenes in Christ's life and to not a few of His words. He spake in riddles, He talked in parables, He dreamed in metaphors. Unless we are of the same

mental breed we cannot follow Him, we do not belong to His kith, He does not speak our mother tongue. Hence it is that some are wise and some are foolish in the things of the kingdom of heaven; that which is poetry to one man is prose to another, and that which is prose in some instances may be burning, throbbing poetry in others. All things are not the same things to two people; each takes his own view, each has his own God. Perhaps we have lost a great deal of the true theology by supposing that there is only one God, in the sense that all men must take the same view of Him or be lost. There is only one God—that is the glory of the Christian religion—but in how many phases does He reveal Himself, to how many ministries in the heart does He appeal, at what various points He knocks if haply the door may be opened and entrance effected. "This or that man," is the common foolish talk, "does not take my view of God, and I cannot take his view of God, and therefore it is impossible that we can both be right." That is the kind of frivolity, mental, utterest foolishness, that destroys the possibility of true religion making any progress. "My God," said one, "my fathers' God," and the apostle Paul says "my gospel." We must try to find the unity beyond the diversity, and question the unity that does not testify itself in variety. We are different men, and therefore we must take different conceptions and appreciations of things.

There is discipline in bewilderment. Many people find heterodoxy in it. Many persons think that religion consists of clear views. What is a view? and what are clear views? and what are the chances of clear views in grey days and cloudy times, and times of unrest to the soul, and sadness because of sin, and hopelessness because the last door we battered at did not open? We measure ourselves by false standards, and we especially measure others by standards of our own creation. We may be singing the same great truth in a thousand different tunes. It is not the tune but the truth, not the rhyme but the hymn, that we should be careful and anxious about.

"We cannot tell what He saith." Here He has

been teaching us to pray. We could follow the little simple prayer very well up to a given sentence, and there we stopped. It sounded to us like a rebuke or like blasphemy. We could say, "Our Father, which art in heaven"—good. "Hallowed be Thy name"—yes. "Thy kingdom come"—certainly. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"—yes, yes, with all my heart. "Give us this day our daily bread"—beautiful. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us"—no, He never said that. He could not have said that; look at it, it is flat blasphemy; setting ourselves up as a model to God, as who should say, "Oh Thou in heaven, forgive us as Thou hast seen us forgive one another all these years and centuries." What! Iscariot cannot go further wrong. "Forgive us our trespasses as"—after the manner of men; Thou hast seen me forgive mine enemy, forgive me just as I have done him. No! they have got hold of that sentence wrong, they have inverted it, they have misunderstood it. Think what it says! and we sing it as it it were part of some every-day tune. Think, men, think; you are putting yourselves up as models to God. "As we forgive them that trespass against us." And yet there may be some deeper meaning in it than we have at first seen. The Lord had many swords; out of His mouth there proceeded a sharp two-edged sword. Was there not a sword in every beatitude? Have we got hold of the right end? What a challenge to us to examine our own hearts, to take to pieces or otherwise analyse our own motive and spirit and way of doing things. There, said one, who little thought what he was about as he was going fluently on with his prayer—no, I cannot say that. "Give us this day our daily bread"—certainly, and we will kiss the hand that gives it, but "Forgive me as I forgave the man who offended against me"? Why, I have not forgiven him, I am looking out for opportunities to avenge the wrong; I will not be insulted, dishonoured, without taking back more blood than he took. Stop the prayer; take a sword, dip it in blood, and dash it as a full stop after the previous part of the prayer, but I dare not say, "Forgive me as I forgave mine enemy." I am on the watch for him, I know to what feast he goes, I will

wait, and when he is full of wine and stupefaction I will work my vengeance upon him.

Yet there may be profitableness even in this form of the prayer, because it may set me thinking. I say, If that is to be it, I had better hasten to my enemy, and make my peace with him, and offer him all the hospitality of my cordial forgiveness; then I will go back and say, "As I forgave that offending man"—even then I should have a poor plea, for man's best is less than God's nothing. There is a discipline in bewilderment. I must think about it, I must go still further into it. Is not God creating for me now a great opportunity? Is He not giving me a great honour in permitting me in some mysterious way to constitute myself into the model by which He shall shape His own adminstration? "Lord, how oft shall my brother offend against me and I shall forgive him—seven times?" And Jesus answered, "I say not unto thee, until seven times; but, until seventy times seven." "We cannot tell what He saith." It is not in flesh and blood to obey this. You are quite right, it is not in flesh and blood to follow that great command, but it is in the grace of Christ, it is in the grace of the Cross. "Where sin abounds grace doth much more abound." Always think of that "abound" as billow chasing billow upon some infinite sea. But we left our house to-day without having forgiven one of the household. "No." Yes! And we sang, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." Yes; go back, and forgive, and then return, and finish the hymn which will be no longer a mockery. We all have persons against whom we have grudges, we are offended in some degree; we have not risen to the mystery of our call in Christ Jesus when He tells us to forgive everybody who turns again saying, "I have sinned." You did forgive a little. That is impossible; no man can forgive a little, it is either forgiveness or not forgiveness. Here we have no shading or grading. We are trifling with God when we are going to do the work of forgiveness in fractions and a little at a time, as we say. Oh the uplifting of soul, the overflow of emotion and heaven's own gladneas when, for Christ's sake, we can say, "I forgive you." That is the millennium of the soul, that is the

day of the Son of man in the heart. And yet you know and I know that we say, "Confidence is a plant of slow growth." We forgive but we do not forget, we cannot but remember; and we are the souls that say, "Lord, take us as models"! If He did, He would not have darkness enough in which to imprison our souls.

It is marvellous at how many places we may stop and say, "We know not what He means, what He saith." We have been with Him, the disciples might have said, now a year, two years, and three years, and He has given us hints that He is going away, and yet in all those days He never asked a man amongst us to pray for Him. Two or three of us have gone up mountain-paths step for step with the Son of God; we have seen the wrinkles of sorrow deepen His cheeks, we have seen His eyes melt in tears, but He never called Peter or James or John, and said unto one of them, "Ask all the others to join you in praying for Me"—never. Who was this Son of man? who is this Majesty who asks no prayer on His own account, yet who prays for His enemies, and dries the tears of others' sorrows? We have been with with Him one year and two and three, and He never accepted a single suggestion from any of us. Who is this Son of man? who is this Man that constitutes no committee of consultation? Who is this more than creature, who never asked for advice, and never said to one of us, "What do you think ought to be done under such and such circumstances?" It is when I follow the Christ in this way that I have no doubt about His deity; what I have seen in Him is deity enough for me. He never asked me to pray for Him, He never asked me to encourage Him by making a single suggestion; more than that, when we did suggest things to Him He blew them away with the soft wind of pitying scorn. We wanted to burn down some people who were not behaving themselves and who showed some dishonour to the Saviour, and He said, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of; the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." And when we once suggested that the company should all go into the villages and get victuals as well as they could, He said, "Make them

sit down on the green grass, and give them what you have." And not the oldest disciple, not the fairest disciple, could make an effective suggestion to this Son of God. We know not what He saith. "Give to these people, thousands strong, satisfaction of their hunger with this poor little heap of things that we have here, hardly enough for the dozen of us?" "Yes, make them sit down, and sit down on the green grass, and I will break the bread"; and when the right hand breaks the bread the bread is increased; it is the wrong hand that goes towards poverty; the true hand goes towards affluence and abounding satisfaction. He never sought pity for Himself; He never gathered us around Him at the eventide and said, "You see what a day of real misery I have had: do not your hearts, as the hearts of men, pity Me in that distress?" Never. He saw some poor women weeping about Him, and He said, "Women, weep not for Me, weep for yourselves; the hour of desolation is coming upon your city, do not weep for Me." He never asked patronage from any man. And yet they have now fed—starved—Him upon endowments. We would have given anything in some places we were at to have indicated the most hospitable heart again and again, and if He had only lifted a finger or breathed a meaning sigh He should have had all there was in the house and all there was in the bank. He never did that. And now they have made Him chief of the mendicants, a begging friar, and inflicted upon Him the disappointment which follows blasphemous expectation.

Jesus Christ never rebuked anybody for merely intellectual errors. He expected them; intellectual errors must attach themselves to finite thinking. Jesus Christ did not pay any attention whatever to mere opinions as simple products of an undisciplined and unchastened intellect. He did not say, "Be good enough to show me your theological statement, and I will see whether you are right or wrong." As if any man could be either right or wrong by a written certificate of anything whatsoever. He cared for the heart, He looked into the soul, He offered the soul cleanness, and I will follow Him. It is good to be where Jesus is.

[*Thursday Morning, 4th July*, 1901.]

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we humbly thank Thee for the Holy Scriptures. We bless Thee that these writings are now in our mother tongue; we are glad that we are able to peruse Thy will in letters and words we can in some measure understand. Holy men of old wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; as they wrote, so would we read: we humbly pray Thee, therefore, in the name of Jesus Christ Thy Son, for the great gift of the Holy Ghost, who alone can take of the things of Christ and shew them unto us. May He dwell in our hearts as the Interpreter of the Saviour, may He bring all things to our remembrance whatsoever we have learned concerning Him of whom Moses and the prophets did write. Thus shall the Book be precious to us, a light shall come upon it, and a light shall stream out of it, and in Thy light we shall see light, and thus shall we dwell in the Book of God as in a sanctuary. We bless Thee that we are not left to ourselves, to the authority of our own reason, or to the prejudice of our own will; we thank Thee for the authority of the indwelling Holy Ghost; may we accept that authority alone, and be swayed and ruled by it in our study of life and in all our study of Thy will. If any man be otherwise minded God will reveal even this unto him, so that we shall have no lack of light, there shall be no night in our soul, but the streaming light of the summer sun of the Divine indwelling: thus shall we be enlarged in mind, comforted in heart, directed in energy, and when we come to the end we shall know that the pillar which went before us by day was the Spirit of God, that the flame which enlightened our night was the Spirit of the Most High, and that the meaning of all was transfiguration into the likeness of the Son of God. Amen.

CLII.

THE MAN OF GOD.

"*The man of God.*"—2 Tim. iii. 17.

WE have been so accustomed to read these words as part of a sentence that we may not have detached them so that we can look at the separate unset jewel. The diamond is either set or it is unset; we get two different views of the stone according to its being set or not set. Here is a truly first-water diamond unset, with hardly a background—"the man of God." Paul seems to be taking part in the education of this man. He wants him to be well taught; he would that the man of God should have a book in his hands and that he should read it day and night, constantly praying that the Holy Spirit would re-write the book in to-day's language and re-utter it with to-day's emphasis. He would have every man of God divinely instructed in Scripture; for it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, for everything good and true and useful. It is in this way, by constant perusal and constant assimilation, that the man of God is to become mature, perfect, well equipped, strong in wisdom at every point.

Let us look, however, at the detached sentence—"the man of God." There are some men well known to us, it may be, with whose name we never would think of associating the name of God. They are the miracles, they are the outstanding wonders and monsters of history. I say there are men well known to us with whom we could not associate the name of God, we should be conscious of a revulsion; nay, we might go further still and consider in cool reason that to associate the name of God with some men, or some men with the name of God, would be a kind of profane comedy. Let us think about that. It is utterly

hideous ; some kind of villainy must have been done to bring about this dark result. There is not a baby in all the world that we would not almost instinctively connect with the name of God. The babe looks as if it were worthy of that name, so beautiful, so trustful, so altogether lovely and suggestive of love that we have no difficulty whatever in saying, We give this babe into the bosom of God, thence it came and thither it will return. That would be beautiful, most sweet, and from our point of view most natural. Yet there are some men whose names we dare hardly mention in a trembling whisper in the ear of God ; they have gone so far away, they have been disgraced and utterly discredited, that it would be like taking a murdered carcase to the altar, not a dying carcase, but a dead one, the blood rushing out and everything gone away that was of the Spirit and that was of the nature of things heavenly and divine. May we say such words again ? We are gathered on a warm summer noonday in the sanctuary, we are lovingly crouching round the altar, but do not let that fact blind us to the other fact, that there are men who have no liking for the altar, who hate the altar, who turn all our hymns and psalms and aspirations into hideous cries of blasphemy and detestation. Is that so ? Yes ; a sad, piercing, thrilling Yes is the only answer we can make to such an inquiry. The danger is that we, having just laid down the book of Psalms, or risen from our knees and brought down our hands from the heavens which they were searching for light, may think that everybody is just as interested in things divine as we are. Your own sister mayhap would not take hold with you of the hymn-book out of which you have just been singing ; your own brother may return to-night to curse the name you bear ; your own mother may look at you with red eyes when she sees you returning from your Sunday-school or your public devotion. To associate such names with the name of God would provoke laughter or would evoke groans and tears. That is the point to start at. You would imagine that aboriginally, from the very first day after the expulsion from Eden, every man was as good as every other man in the matter of pious aspiration and in the matter of self-distrust as regards the higher

issues and destinies of life. Here is the great cleavage, here we see for the first time the right hand and the left, and men flocking to each as a superior power and a dooming voice determines. Here enters the mystery of kinship. A man is not necessarily akin to his own brother. Kinship has in it an element of consent. The merely bodily life is not to be called brotherhood or sisterhood. "Who is my mother and who are my brethren?" What is the new law of kin? "He that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my mother and sister and brother."

Then what is to be done? Are not all men men of God? In one sense, the lowest, are not all men men of God? Yes, in the divine purpose. Then why does not the divine purpose effect itself, establish itself in a great fact? Because so mysterious is human nature that a man can say No to God. There is the history — do not let us trouble ourselves about other and inner mysteries metaphysical and indefinable; there is the awful fact, that a man can draw down his eyelids and shut out the sun, that a child can double its little fist and smite the face of God, that our own consent has to be secured in order to our being adopted into the divine family and in order to entitle us to bear the greatest of all designations, "men of God." But some men seem to be born good. They do. It is not so difficult for some men to pray as for others. Quite true. Some men seem to receive the kingdom of heaven naturally. Certainly, so it would appear. But we must judge nothing by appearance, we must penetrate into spiritual reality, we may have to re-define the kingdom of God in such cases. Many persons appear to be amiable who are feeding the devil at the table of their confidence, and who are making him strong for some deadly outgoing. We are so betrayed by what is called amiability and niceness and sweetness, that we know not at all times what may be hidden by these words. Take off the silken verbiage, and we may be astounded to find that the most apparent amiability was but a silken covering for something else. Let us search our hearts and ask God to try our ways and to inquire into our reins and inmost thoughts. For it cannot be true that one part of the world started heavenward

and the other started downward; the Scriptures say, "There is none righteous, no, not one"—no lonely soul in the way of righteousness by nature, no lonely soul that out of the solitude of its spiritual morality could arise and say, "I have no need of the Cross; so far as I am personally concerned, that Cross is a mistake on the part of God." We are all in one condemnation, all we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way. That is the testimony of Scripture, and I know it to be true. What makes the difference between one man and another? No man can answer that question. We can make approximate answers, we can show ourselves right skilful and inventive in the suggestion of differences, but far behind our speculative imagination and our fanciful philosophy there lies a mystery over whose darkness God alone presides. Why, these two boys are sons of the same mother. Yes. Would you think it to be so after you had known them these few months? Certainly not; they have no sentiment in common, they differ in every possible point, they cannot stand at each other's standpoint and see things in the same angle and in the same light; they will never from all human appearance reach the same destiny and have a home under the same roof. What makes the difference? No man can tell; recognise the fact, work upon it. And yet in another way, and approaching the subject from another point of view, we are all united in the point of depravity. That simplest-looking face may screen a fiend: blessed be God, that roughest face may veil an angel. We shall never find our unity in incidentals, in anything that is transient; we must find our unity in a protoplasm not physiological, but in a decree and a destiny divine. And, blessed be God, if we are so different, we can all be absolutely united in another manhood; that is to say, in the manhood of Christ Jesus our Lord. If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature; he started from a new point, he passed through a new Eden, he is on a new and higher road, he is on the road to the true manhood. O thou drooping and half-despairing soul, the door of mercy stands open, and on it is written in red flame and as it were in red blood struggling with the flame, Jesus Christ, the true Man, the God-Man, the saving Man.

Who is this man of God? It is the man who has been born again. God met him in a far country, in a wild, wild land, known for hunger and desolateness and misery; and God made great proposals to him in the name of Jesus Christ, told him that he might return from the land of desolation into the land of plenteousness and long nightless summer. Is that so? Yes, that is so. Did the man consent? He did. What did he do? He threw himself into the conditions marked out by God:—"Repent, and believe the Gospel, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved; thy Father waits for thee; there is just time for thee to reach home, not a moment to spare, not a moment to linger in with the expectation that some door will be opened: now is the accepted time and now is the day of salvation." What did the man say? He said he would go. What then? He went. Where is he now? He is in the house of God, by the right, conferred by Christ, of being a man of God. Have we all to undergo the same process? We have; not in its mere incidents: never mistake the coat for the character, never mistake the mere method of doing a thing for the essential thing itself. We have all to be born again. Man was made in Genesis, he is born in the Gospel. Before, he had but a kind of foothold on the earth out of which he was raised, but now in Christ Jesus he is a soul held of God, and in Him he lives and moves and has his being. Are there not many who preach a contrary doctrine? There are, and it all comes to nothing. Why, you have watched history and the development of such movements. They are fresh for a day—yes; why, even a beautiful flower may be fresh for four-and-twenty hours, a few hours more by the addition of water, but being cut off from the sun, when you pluck a flower you drag it out of the sun, it soon withers. So it is with these anti-Christian programmes. It is sad and pitiful to me to watch these deluded creatures; for many of them are really sincere men; but you can be sincere in ignorance as much as you can be in wisdom. Sincerity is nothing but a detached attribute; we must inquire what is the man sincere in. Saul was sincere when he haled the Church and drove it to its martyrdom; but that

sincerity availed nothing. Do beware—would God I could speak it in a fitting tone!—do beware of those people who are going to cure your souls by plasters. The plasters, porous or otherwise, you can have a dozen of for one shilling and sixpence, but they never touch the soul. I do not want a plaster for the skin, I want a balm, as we have just been singing, for the soul, wounded, disabled, and sore distressed. But we must as Christian churches, I think, be patient with these people who have gone after the quack sciences of the day. As a matter of fact, some people love novelty; you can always get a little crowd in a London street if you have a little something to show. People like to see things. Many people open places for the exposition and exhibition of divers plasters, and for a time they can pay their way, but in some instances the gasfitter is at the door threatening to cut off the gas if they do not pay the bill. It is so, and God will have it so, and nothing—God in heaven help me to say this well—nothing can stand but the Gospel of Christ.

And who is this man of God? The man whose supreme thought is God Himself, who longs to see God with the eyes of faith and love. He misses God if He be gone but for an hour. We know what this is in the house. The individual makes the house, the one person makes the other persons tolerable. There are people who if they were to go out of the house would take everything with them. Whenever I see a little toddling child on the streets, I say, sometimes loudly, "If that little two-feet-long thing were not to go home to-night, nobody else would go." But does the house depend on that little toddling creature? It does. Of course the father and mother will say, "Baby has not come home, but she will turn up in the morning; if she is not close at hand she is safe in the police-station, so we will lie down and get what sleep we can, and we shall see her in the morning." Is it so? Answer! It is thus that some people miss God. "Why standest Thou afar off, O God?" "Oh if I knew where I might find Him!" Hear that voice, lonely, hollow, crying voice, appealing as it were to the very wind, that the soul so lonely might be taken into the presence

of the Father. A soul thus yearning may be well entitled to be described as a "man of God."

Who is this man of God? He would take supreme delight in the service of God. It is no burden to him; everything else is comparatively burdensome; he is a truly religious man. There are many religions that are not religious; there is many a sermon that is not religious. Religiousness is a peculiar quality of thinking, a special and incommunicable quality of desire; true religion or religiousness is—we can find no better name for it, we have searched all the vocabularies—prayer, a living cry to a living God. We speak of some men as men of prayer. It is a lovely title; it is no cant term. Of course we can degrade anything into cant, but things must not be judged in a state of degradation, but in a state of primary meaning and supreme purpose. And so regarded prayer is that great citadel that rises into the blue heavens which men can see from every point of the compass all over the world; and they say, seeing it, "O Thou who hearest prayer!" and because He hears prayer people say if He did not hear prayer they would not pray to Him; they might pray in some formal words, in some verbal trick, but prayer as an upgoing and outgoing of the soul to find God would be impossible. Some people delight in the service of prayer; it is a rare luxury to them, rare, not in the sense of being infrequent, but rare in the tone of its quality. Some of us really love the Bible, many of us may be said to eat it; we can by the grace of God get every drop of juice out of this vine, and it is fine feeding, this feeding on the wine of the divine love. You will have great difficulty in the years that are coming if you think of the Bible as a set of letters, a number of little volumes all bound together under one cover, a book that may be stolen; let the Bible be in you—that is what Jesus Christ always said, He told us again and again that a thing must be in us or we do not possess it; He said, "I will give him water that shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." My brother, do not have thy sermon, be it. That is what Jesus Christ always told us in His day and night school; He is the great

Master of the continuation schools; He has school after school; as soon as we leave one school we come into another where the light is clearer and the day is longer and the teachers are more patient, because more divine.

Then do not let us find fault with one another, because one man may be on the way to becoming a man of God. Well, I do not think that I am drawing too much upon an imagination which I have endeavoured to heat by suggesting that in our own selves here to-day, so far as my observation enables me to make out, we are not all of one age. This is not your birthday—all of us, our birthday, and the same number of years summed up in it? No, I think not; I think I see some people younger than I am, and I think I see some people, unless nature has been very unkind to them, who are older than you are. "Well, then, of course, that being the case, how can you preach a common Gospel?" That is the mystery, that is the wonder, that is the gracious delight. But I am sitting here, quoth one, and my son is sitting behind me or before me or beside me, how can you preach a Gospel to us both? That is the mysterious beauty of the Gospel; it suits childhood and patriarchal age. So does the sunlight. Why, what can that little child that has to come down the steps one step at a time—what can that little creature know about the sunshine? Even that little creature can be bathed in noonday; it is a great river, and every one of us can bathe in it without fear of drowning. And there are little syllables and little notes and little tones that are before all the dictionaries, and will be when the dictionary has been sold and forgotten.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the Triune God, abide with us in all the work and in all the suffering, till on tired eyes there softly lies the stillest of all slumbers. Amen.

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we thank Thee that Thy house is in the centre of our houses, that our dwelling-places are leaning against the walls of God's sanctuary. We bless Thee that the tabernacle of God is with men upon the earth; thus we are connected with all that is beyond, all the mornings and the summers of glad eternity. We thank Thee for all religious aspirations and desires, for all tender hungerings after God, and thirstings after the river of God which is full of water. We are glad to be in the bread-house, the great family house; there is bread enough in our Father's house and to spare, and as for the water, hast Thou not called us by the voices of men and angels to come and drink abundantly of that stream? We need Thy bread and Thy water, for the way of the wilderness is long and difficult, and oftentimes the wind is a great fever, and then again a sudden frost; but Thou knowest every inch of the road, Thy Spirit can guide us along the whole path; Thou knowest where the roses bloom, and where the unlooked-for gates open upon unexpected paradises. Again and again hast Thou warmed our hearts with visions and lights and music which had not come within the compass of our dreams. Oh that we could rest in Thee, and not intermeddle with God; oh that our life might be turned into faith, and that the word faith should be greater than the word life, linking us to God, associating our souls with the citizenship of heaven, and giving us to feel that what we see and hear now in this time sphere is not to be compared with what is to be revealed to our redeemed souls. We suffocate ourselves with poisoned air, we cause ourselves to die by dwelling on things unworthy of the mind and of the spirit and of the redeemed life; may we ask Thee for the Holy Ghost through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is the giver of the other and the abiding Paraclete, so that we may be led forward and upward in continual overflow and excess of life. We are tired of death, the grave is too small for us; we aspire to the heavens, we bless Thee that we are in Christ Jesus the Lord, and that our prayers are His prayers; He begins them and amplifies them and will complete them by His own intercession. Save us from little thoughts, mean ideas, paltry policies, and all things that are unworthy of a manhood that has been redeemed; teach us to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and to condescend as from an infinite height to all the things that lie about our feet on the earth. Thus shall we be noble men, sons of God, handling the business of the

world with great tact and skill, and never forsaking the altar built on Calvary. Thou knowest the bleeding hearts that are here, Thou knowest that each heart carries its own sorrow, Thou knowest that the man who laughs most often sobs most, and that the clown may be himself a martyr in the sight of God. Bless all the little children, the sunniest, sweetest flowers of the spring. Tell the old man that there is no such thing as old age if the soul be rooted in God. Speak to those who carry heavy burdens and sore distresses, that they may feel that presently, almost suddenly, they may see the King in His glory, and forget their woe. The Lord look upon the land. God save the king, and establish his throne in righteousness. The Lord influence and direct and inspire all who lead the highest sentiment of the age, and the Lord Himself be the defence of those who for the moment are worsted by a strong arm. The Lord Himself face the devil for us, and look him out of countenance, and drive him into his native darkness. The Lord give us the old, old spirit of courage, the fine chivalry, the manly independence, the Christian temper and fearlessness; then shall the sons of heaven have hope, and the earth will redeem its youth. The Lord be with those who cannot be with us; we have left them in the sick-chamber, which is the sanctuary of the house; the Lord look upon the cradle, and say something to the listening sleeper. The Lord take hold of those who are afraid of the cold river, and Himself smite that icy water and give the pilgrim a good passsage, yea, a passage on dry land to the green shore. Amen.

CLIII.

DIVINE APPOINTMENTS.

"*The time appointed was long.*"—DAN. x. 1.

ALL things are appointed. Yet it pleases our little vanity to imagine that we appoint some things ourselves. Oh the fuss of the world, and the noise, and the fruitlessness! We have deposed God from being husbandman, and have taken to growing crops of our own kind. They always fail. The one sentence which I have to deliver to my friends this

morning is, All things are under the divine appointment; let them alone. The wise man says, "Every fool will be meddling." He spake more than two thousand years ago, and if men were meddling then, what are they doing now? Hustling the Almighty out of His own universe, recreating in wild dream the universe itself, and trying to furnish it, and all failing, we are inclined by serious and strenuous temptation to think that it is Providence that is failing. We shall be wiser one day. Meanwhile, the appointing God is on the throne; the Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice. What a time the Almighty has of it! We hustle Him in our very prayers; we are impatient because we are ignorant, and we are noisy because we are weak, and the Lord is hustled about in His own house. The spirit of calm is dead.

It is interesting to me as a student of the Book to see in how many aspects divine appointment is presented in the Holy Scriptures. God has taken everything under His own care; He has allowed no one little inch of His great creation to bear any name but His own. May we not have a little patch in which to grow our own weeds and nettles? No; the earth is the Lord's; not ninety-nine hundredths of it, but every part and particle belongs unto the Lord, and all the moments, all the centuries, slow or fast, and through them all there runs the divine appointment. The first chapter of Genesis covers the whole history of time. "God said . . . And God said . . . And God said." Then long after a man arose and said in his divinely inspired moments and ecstasies, "In the beginning was the Word"; the Word before was shattered into syllables, the Word before was broken into time-foam. We are thus invited to enter into tabernacles and sanctuaries and high places and quiet lands where some angel spirit of tranquility broods in one perpetual peace. We shall never get peace so long as we depose God. No number of negatives can make up the one positive, God. We love modifications and compromises and approaches and conciliations, and we have a whole creation of gossamers and fantasies and dreams and nightmares. We should get back to the old quiet, the infinite peace. We do not know what Jesus Christ gave us when

He gave us peace. The word "peace" is not understood; the word "peace" includes and comprehends all other words that mean righteousness, purity, trust, hope. "My peace I give unto you"; I invite you within the environment of My Sabbath, where no perturbation troubles the lake of the ineffable tranquility. You cannot appoint anything; you cannot make an engagement; you do your best in that way when you invoke the divine name, saying, "If the Lord will." It all depends upon that; for the moment you may laugh it out of court, but there it is; it returns, it abides, it waits. Only truth can wait; but wait it can.

Let us look at some of the instances in which the divine appointment appears as the central thought. "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?" (Job vii. 1). Job found that out by sorrow. Sorrow is one of the headmasters in God's school; it is the costliest department of the great school of God, is the department of sorrow. To think of it all: the child's little face all bloom waiting the sharp chisel and the heavy mallet of the sculptor. It is so that we learn really where we are, and what we are, and what we should be, and what we should do. It has been forced upon the attention of man that he has an appointed time upon the earth. The idea is divine; when we seize it we come into possession of a revelation. It never could have occurred to any merely human thought that there was an appointed time when the brain would strike, when the whole life of the machine would stand still. There is an appointed time, a measured day, a time measure that goes into seconds and hundredth parts of seconds, into the twinkling of an eye; and the chemist, the careful investigator, says that science will not be satisfied until it can measure the millionth part of the twinkling of an eye. Science is thus become religious. Surely it could not have occurred to the human brain that there is an appointed time to man upon the earth. We might by a large accumulation of instances construct an inference, and we might possibly think that there would be a day of man, and that all men would perish on that day—the death day. But it is not so. The infant bud is

plucked from the mother's breast, and the old man totters in a world he never wanted to come into; he has no contemporaries, there are none left who began with him, or so few that their complaining only adds emphasis to his own murmur. You appoint anything? Will you be living to-morrow if I call upon you at noonday? Shall I myself be alive at noonday? or will it be in the night time that I find the gate that opens upon the eternal unseen? We cannot tell. We are in that degree at least, mean as it is, to be religious, reverent, thoughtful, filled with that wonder which is hardly distinguishable from prayer. Who appoints a time to man upon the earth? He who made man appoints his time; all our days are in God. He never shows us to-morrow; He might do that. No, therein is the sovereignty of God. This is Sunday, might not God show us now getting on to mid-day just one gleam of Monday? Never! Monday is where God is; the future is as invisible and as incomprehensible as God. Men do not think of that. They chaffer about to-morrow as if they owned it.

Sometimes the appointments of God are associated with high joys, with royal feast and plenteousness, and the wine in which there is no drunkenness. So in Psalm lxxxi. 3 I read, "Blow up the trumpet . . . in the time appointed." It would be a poor world without the trumpet and all that the trumpet means. The trumpet means victory, progress, thankfulness, courage, and an enemy beaten and blown off. So there is an appointed time for bright joy to come and take up the trumpet and blow a blast that will be music in the ear of God. The world shall not always be sunless. We live in these high promises; these are the vaticinations that make the future tolerable; but for such prophetic outlook and forecast who dare pray that he may awake to-morrow? God has filled His book with trumpets and shawms and cymbals and dances, and sometimes the Church even now goes wild with holy ecstasy. There is great danger in that, however, because only the ecstatic can understand ecstasy, and only those who were born full of red blood can enter into Pentecostal thunder and fury and anthem.

There is the great difficulty of the Church in its higher moods. There are so many anæmic people, so many hearts that are begging for blood and have hardly breath enough to offer the supplication. We cannot imagine that such people can understand Pentecost. They would say, "A little exaggerated, I should think. Do you not consider that there was a good deal of cataclysm about Pentecost?" You see these anæmic people are so very quiet and thin and feeble, and they have to call in a maidservant or manservant to help them to read to-day. But do not imagine that these people want any trumpets, any feast days in the Church; they would say it was rhetoric, exciting, distressing, hysterical. Men, we must not be ruled by such souls; if we allow them to vote it must be in a ballot-box to which there is no bottom. These are not the men to lead the world. The world has always been led by fire, deity; God is fire.

Then we come to another view in Dan. x. 1: "The thing was true, but the time appointed was long." What does it matter about the time if we have got the truth? Mark these wonderful words: "The thing was true"—that is the point to stop at—"but the time was long." A century is nothing to those who have the truth and hold it for man and God. God counts time in His own way. He does not listen to the tick of our poor pendulum; a man might stop that, a little child could stop the pendulum, but not the time, not the evolution, not the certainty of the final point. It is here that we live as Christian teachers. If we had to sow the seed one day and go out for the harvest another, we should have no harvest at all. It is a long time before we whet the sickle, but the thing is in the ground, is planted by God in God's place under God's conditions, and one day there will be a silver trumpet blown which the nation shall hear, and hearing, shall spring to reap the harvest of God. The thing you have to be sure about is that what you hold or teach is true. All other things are accidents, phases, vanishing points. Herein is the strength and the confidence of the Church of Christ: it holds the truth about God, man, redemption, destiny; and the Church, holding

these great treasures, can wait. Do not be too impatient with those who have run away because all things continue as they were from the beginning. There are men who are constitutionally impatient, temperamentally impetuous and uncontrolled; we must leave them some time, some room, some opportunity, and when they arise it will be time for us to take our pleasures away from their shadow. Believe in eternity; that is the weight that can still and steady all the feverish motions and aspirations and madnesses of men. "The Lord will bring it to pass" —when?—"in His own time." Forgetting this great truth, I am sometimes inclined to charge the Christian Church, or the lower portions of it, with a species of atheism, because that Church seems in propagating its faith to deny the very faith it propagates. One of the lessons we have to learn is that no man's life is, as a matter of time, of the slightest consequence to the movement of God. You are—what? eighty years of age nearly. I will show you a tree that is three eighties, and looks upon you as a little rambling holiday-maker gathering daisies at its root. You thought you were old—no man can be that; that is one of the fruits that is too high for you. The oldest man has his one characteristic, and will keep it as long as he is upon the earth, and that is the characteristic of inexperience and in general terms of knowing nothing about anything. The highest religion will often be silent. Bold would be the preacher, his life would be endangered, if he asked a great congregation like this to sit still for five minutes without saying one word, but letting God and the heart talk it out. Yet that is to be part of the religion of the future. "I was dumb because Thou didst it"; I was silent because I saw Thy hand; I said, How long is this devil's revel to last? The Lord said, Peace, be still. If He can be still, why not this poor creature man, provided that that poor creature man has in his heart the sure and unchangeable conviction that the thing is true—that central thing, that organic nerve that binds the stars? Christians, you are losing ground for want of faith; you live on reports, and not on the Bible. You say, "The secretary will now read the annual report." Ay, it is an annual report; only the divine

secretary can read The Report. All these other reports are interim, they belong to the meanwhile, the passing moment, but the Registrar is in heaven and His record beyond the fire. Oh that we had more faith in God, and that we could oftentimes simply wait upon Him with loving, longing patience, that peculiar quality of patience that has nothing to do with indifference, that patience that has the gleaming look in its eye that means, I want to say something, but I cannot; God understands.

The old saints were trained by waiting. Habakkuk was; he says, "The vision is yet for an appointed time . . . wait for it" (Hab. ii. 3). Can we go further to-day than this grand prophecy? Is not this one sentence a great philosophy of history and of time and of divinity? The vision was for an appointed time. If the Lord has said, "I will wait," that is enough for me; I do not ask when, nor do I ask how; He has defined my function, He says in one pregnant injunction, "Wait for it." Beware, however, of intellectual or spiritual indolence; it is not a question of turning your back upon the divine word, and saying, "Let it come, then, according to some divine appointment," but waiting is worshipping, waiting is hoping, waiting is praying. Do not imagine that we are remitted to a sleepy slumberous ministry of inertness or inactivity in any shape or in any degree. The highest expression of power is repose; the highest expression of energy is standing still under divine conditions and according to the movement of the divine inspiration.

A wonderful passage occurs in the writing or speech of the apostle Paul. He says, "God . . . hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts xvii. 26)—that is, of the nations of all the earth. God is the one geographer. We have remitted certain things to Him which no man can define, but He Himself stoops down and says, "I will measure life for you, and set out your little globe into red and white, and blue and green, and you shall dwell in this section of the globe, and you shall dwell in the other; the bond of unity amongst you is your blood." Of course it pleases man in some of

his partially intoxicated moods to make a little globe of his own, and we delimit frontiers, and we keep certain lines geographic at the point of the bayonet, and we alter the aspect of things. Only partially. Do not trouble yourselves about these things; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid; God is in His heaven, the whole earth is appointed and set out by Him, and if you interrupt Him it will be at your own peril and to the distress of your own peace; God is going to work out everything, and will get the earth back to a sweeter Eden than it first bloomed in: be quiet. Oh the letters you write which you need not write, and the demonstrations you demonstrate which you had better never have stirred out of their sleeping, and the uproar and the infinite tumult in which we pass resolutions which we have forgotten before we vote for them. It is well, back of all things, to have the throne of God. A great prophecy has been made, Jesus said, "They shall come from the east and from the west, from the north and the south." Has the Lord dominion in all these quarters? Yes, in every one of them; He made them all; He puts them in His own cupboards, attaches His own claim to them. The signature of God belts the world.

Any more appointments? A dozen more, but notably one in Psalm civ. 19—"He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down." He appoints the bounds of their habitation, referring to the nations; He appointeth the moon for seasons, He sets her there to mark portions of our time. An eclipse even does not extinguish the moon. When you hear of an eclipse of the sun what does it mean? does it mean that any portion of the radiant circumference has been shed? Not at all, not a spark has been lost; the eclipse has nothing to do really with the sun or with the moon; they are all there; eclipses are but transient shadows.

Now I can imagine a man receiving all these truths into his heart and constructing them into a philosophy of life. I think it would be a better philosophy than the man himself ever made; it will stand longer, it will answer more questions, than any other system

of philosophy I have ever heard of; it is complete, so complete that it makes no noise, so perfect that it can wait. Meanwhile, men, brethren, and fathers, do not you commit yourselves to any green theory, to any poor little perishable frameworks and programmes. They may be useful for the moment, I am not deriding them in any contemptuous sense, I am only saying that we are not to be disturbed by phases of the earth or the moon or the sun or all things contained therein. I have been with Jesus, as you have, and we have learned of Him. We were ever afraid of things going wrong, He was always telling us that things would come right. We used to go to Him with bitter complaints, and ask Him if He had heard about Herod and about Cæsar and about earthquake and tempest of a popular and political kind. He paid no attention to us, He kept His peace. At one time indeed He said, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid; you believe in God, believe also in Me"; believe in your Father, and say over your dying child and over every withering life in your house, and over many a shattered fortune and many a dead trust and many a blasted expectation, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth good in His sight."

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, and peace, from Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, abide with us until the appointed time. Amen.

Order of Service, 7th July, 1901.

Voluntary ... ... "Andante" ... ... *H. Smart*

Anthem 9 ... ..." The heavens proclaim Him"... ... *Beethoven*

The Lord's Prayer.—*Hawkins.*

Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation ; But deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn 45 ... "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place"

1st Lesson. Isaiah lv. 1-5.

Chant 103 ... ... Psalm cxxxvi. ... ... *Hawes*

2nd Lesson. Rev. xxii. 16-17.

Anthem ... ... "I was glad" ... ... *Gaul*

I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee.—Psalm cxxii. 1, 2; lxxxiv. 10-12.

Prayer.

Hymn 243 ... "Was there ever kindest shepherd"

Sermon.

Offertory and Quartette :

"Cast thy burden" ... ... *(Elijah) Mendelssohn*

Hymn 484 ... ... "O Bread to pilgrims given"

Benediction and Threefold Amen.—*Gounod.*

Voluntary ... ... "Communion" ... ... *West*

Celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we humbly pray Thee to be kept in our place, to ask only the questions of intelligence and humility, and to submit our will wholly and lovingly unto the only true Will. Lord, teach us to hold our tongues, the good Lord in heaven keep us from presumptuous sin; may we not touch the Ark of the Lord, lest we perish by the lightning of heaven. We thank Thee that we know sometimes how little we are and how frail and how needing instruction and guidance. Holy Spirit, keep us in this temper and frame of mind, that we may be wise men, moving with the cloud, moving with the flame of light, watching the windows of heaven for tokens of God. Thus shall we be quiet, dignified, full of force, and full of the Holy Ghost. We have too much taken our lives into our own hands, and we have called God to our bar that we might cross-examine Omniscience. Oh that we had done otherwise, that we had been simple, sincere, frank, true, accepting the universe as it stands, and falling into the great current of its movement; then had our peace flowed like a river, and our righteousness had been as the waves of the sea. We have come to seek guidance, to solicit the comfort of God, that our weariness may be revived, that our courage may be lifted up, that we may hear some sweet prevailing voice crying unto our souls, Get ye up into the high mountains. The Lord deliver us from selfishness, littleness, and all manner and variety of vanity, infirmity, and self-idolatry; and bring us humbly, lovingly, to the Cross, the Cross of Jesus, the tree of blood, the answer of God to the sins of men. Amen.

CLIV.

SEEKING FOR JESUS.

"*Seeking for Jesus.*"—JOHN vi. 24.

HESE words sound like a snatch of a poem; they almost sing. "Seeking for Jesus,"—on the very smallest invitation they would fall into joyful, ennobling music. As originally applied, they are small enough, and limited enough, but they are so beautiful that they cannot be shut down to small measures and applications. We know right words when we hear them; there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. We know whether a song has fallen from some poor tree or from some open window in heaven; the song awakens all in us that is divine and all in us that is kindred to itself. There is common prayer, there is common song; there is worship that belongs to every kindred and people and tongue under the whole heaven.

The other words that are beautiful in this twenty-fourth verse are, "Jesus was not there." Then who was there? Nobody; it was a kind of gathering-place of emptiness; the little crowd that was there needed centralisation, uplifting into divine form and divine meaning. How one soul makes a place, how the absence of that soul destroys the temple without any promise of its being rebuilt. Somehow, subtly and sometimes inexpressibly, there is one soul that makes the house what it is; you could not exactly say what that soul is, or define it narrowly, but somehow that great roomy word in which we keep all the feelings we cannot express. Because one is absent there is a sense of vacancy and nothingness and disappointment. "When the people saw that Jesus was not there," they left the place. Let us start with that point; make everything depend upon

the presence of Jesus; make it so in the individual character. You like the man, you listen to his talk, you consider his environment, and you weigh and measure his pretensions. Listen, and you will soon discover whether Jesus is the central element of the man's nature, or whether it is a mere name partially forgotten, largely misunderstood, sometimes shockingly mutilated. Have nothing to do with any man when Jesus is not in him. He will cheat you; not the first time, or the second; he will disappoint you, not immediately, now, at this one critical moment, but in the long run. He will mock you with a harvest of disappointment and with a field of bitterness. Do not tell me of your nice men, your amiable men, your very thoughtful men; if these are the only words you are going to use I am going to leave you; the question I ask about myself and about every other man is, How does he stand in relation to Jesus? is he the guest of Jesus or the host of Jesus? is Jesus the name by which he lives and the name without which he could not die? Is he penetrated by the Jesus influence? is he amiable because he is sanctified? is he thoughtful and kind because he has been bathed in the river of the love of Christ? Beware of temptations to declare that he has a sweet voice and a civil manner and that he deports himself in all common relations of life with great grace and consideration to others. All good so far, but if only so far, nothing, rottenness, a guilty capsuled falsehood. My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not; it they say, "Come, let us all have one purse, and let us live all we can whilst we live, and be as joyful and merry as possible, and let us be kind to one another, and have a password which will turn us into a brotherhood masonic and confidential," do not listen to such seductions, they mean in the long run murder. I would God I could teach the young maidens this, the girls and the young beautiful creatures, who seem somehow to have been made to listen to serpents; I wish I could put this great truth right down into their souls; it would be the making of them. Resist every man in whom there is not room for Christ; never mind his income, his appearance, his associations, his pretences, his

lies; he will rob you, not of your money mayhap, but of your soul; break off the engagement, cut it right in two, cut it in two with a sharp sword, throw the pieces away so that they can never be found again.

When the people saw that Jesus was not there they turned their backs, and said, "It was for Jesus we came, we are seeking Jesus; we will take the first boat, the first train, the first opening, and be off." I would apply the same test to every social institution. They have made a number of little institutions, outside the Church, institutions that have no reference whatever to the inner sanctuary. They are going in various ways to convert the world to their opinions, they are going to reconstruct society, they are going to play with time, re-arranging and distributing its twenty-four hours. They never mention the name of Jesus; then they will never succeed. They will draw their salaries, and publish their annual reports, and in the appointed time will abscond because they dare not face their creditors. I do not want any little annexes, some detached Christless huts; I want the Church, the altar, the sanctuary, the shekinah. When you see that Jesus is not in these institutions, leave them. But you think you could do a good deal towards converting them. Not at all; never tell lies to yourself. You think, if you remain there, you can bring a very happy influence to bear upon these creatures. Not at all. If I were to lock you up for the next five years in the Zoological Gardens I should find the tiger, and the serpent, and the lion, and the beast of prey, exactly where I found them at first, and your influence over the beasts would be nothing. But it is in man to build something, it was in him whilst yet his hands were red with dripping blood to build a city. It was in the people who were ambitious, presumptuous, to build a tower which should reach even unto heaven; and they never got there. This institution-mongering is a great nuisance; it hinders the best development and progress of the Church, which ought to be the most inclusive and the most progressive institution under the whole heaven. Men live in little compromises and temporary arrangements. A great political party

meets, and with absolute unanimity and enthusiasm agrees to reserve the right to disagree. It is very comical and painfully sad for people to be telling lies to themselves and daubing walls with untempered mortar.

I would apply the same test to the Church. I am not to be taken in by names; I go further than the label, I want to know the contents, and who has analysed them, who has compounded them, who is responsible for them; and if I do not find Jesus there, I leave the Church, though it be big as a mountain and radiant with merely phosphorescent splendour. If Jesus is not in the sermon, leave the preacher, and at the door cry, Shame! The sermon exists for Jesus, not Jesus for the sermon; the sermon is nothing if it be not filled from end to end, through and through, and even to "Finally" with the spirit and with the love of Jesus. Here I have to pause for a moment to point out two subtle mistakes. The Jesus spirit may be in the sermon without the name of Jesus ever being mentioned. What a long way some people have to go to set their feet on the very threshold of the kingdom of God in this particular matter! Jesus is in the air sometimes, He is in the atmosphere—so calm, so fervid, so full of energy; the whole atmosphere a kind of embodied spirit: Lord, it is good to be here! How so? I cannot tell, but I know it is, I do not understand all these things; my eyes are covered, my brain is one wondrous dream; Lord, never let us leave this mountain-top; here let us build the city of God. So it is with the discourse: it is not necessary to understand a discourse in order to profit by it. There is a great deal of pure, cold rationalism in supposing that unless you understand a sermon you cannot get any benefit from it. I may not understand the music of the great organ or of the great orchestra, but I am uplifted, thrilled, liberated, called away into the wider, fairer spaces of life.

Then, secondly, never forget that it was the habit of Jesus to appear to His disciples "in another form." "After that He appeared unto His disciples in another form"; after that He appeared to two of

them as they were walking in the green lanes or in the shaded paths; after that He appeared to them multitudinously, so that five hundred people saw Him all at once, and saw Him altogether, so that nobody else imagined that he had seen Him but each individual man; and then He appeared unto them in another form, and then without form. We must be careful and gentle with those people who only understand Jesus when they are sitting in their own meeting-house. It would be simply impossible for some people to think that there was a Christian service going on except upon the lines along which they have been proceeding in their own little synagogue for the last five-and-twenty years. It is very difficult for some people to think that the Lord may be in any other nation but their own; they will admit it in a kind of hesitant and smiling manner, as who should say, "Of course it is always possible that these wonderful things may occur, but the Lord made my country, and I think other countries must at least, to a large extent, have made themselves; I do not mind going there now and then in the summer-time, but you would never persuade me to live out of my own country all the year round." What are we to do with these little creatures? We must tolerate them, we must allow them to pick up their food where they think they can pick it up best, we must always be gracious and tolerant to those who are not quite of our own way of thinking; but never let them rule your life. They belittle everything, they narrow and contract everything; they have heard of the word "poetry," and would look it up in the dictionary to find out what it means—as if any dictionary could tell the meaning of the word poetry.

Note the encouraging attitude of these people. They were seeking for Jesus. "What think ye? will He come to the feast?" What does it matter? the feast will go on whether He is here or not. Yes, in a certain mechanical sense the feast may go on so, but if He is not here it will be a poor feast. Seeking for Jesus may be treated as an assurance that seeking is finding. "Seek, and ye shall find": this is always true, but pre-eminently and most

poignantly true in the case of the personality of Jesus Christ the Lord. If you want to find Christ here to-day, He is seated next you; if you really go to the house of God to find Jesus, you will discover Him in all the sanctuary—in the corners, in the roof, in the floor, in every daisy, and in every lamp. You get what you seek for. This is largely true in everything, it is absolutely true in the case of Jesus Christ. The next day the man went into the temple, and Jesus came to him and said, "Believest thou?" and the man said, "Believe what?" "Jesus Christ the Son of God?" And the man said, "Who is He, Lord?" And He said, "He that speaketh unto thee; I that speak unto thee am He." And Jesus Christ is often found in unexpected places. The disciples marvelled that He was preaching on one occasion without their getting a chapel ready for Him; they could not imagine that He had anything to say until a place had been got ready for Him; and lo, when they had been abuying bread out in the villages yonder, they came back and found Him talking to a woman. Marvellous! They nudged one another and said, What is this, and what does this imply? And they laid their little loaves before Him, and He said, "I have bread to eat that ye know not of"; you cannot compass the whole of the kingdom of God; you can see little parts and parcels of it, a window here and a window there, but who has room for infinity? You may find Jesus Christ in some church that you have never been in before. I have found Him in a Roman Catholic church; I have found Him in a High Anglican church; I always find Him in an out-of-the-way Primitive Methodist chapel, and He is sure to be there when the preacher does not know one rule of grammar, but that preacher moves my soul, brings the tears to my eyes, lifts my faith up until it closes with a great intense grasp upon the Son of God. My great fear is that this pulpit life should be turned into a profession—hateful word when applied to the preaching of the Gospel. My fear is that men should think they are made preachers by going through a certain process of what is called training and discipline; which process may be excellent in itself, but we want something other, something more; we want the Holy Ghost.

Without that all your adornments are paltry trinkets, your supposed diamonds are but varieties of worthless paste. Unless Jesus be in us we cannot preach, we cannot touch the wounded, bleeding heart of man.

Seeking is itself a blessing. They who understand such things say that the great delight is in the hunting, not in the killing; they who understand such things say that they engage in this sport and in that for the sake of the sport itself, not that they want to kill any poor fish or any poor creature of the field. Without following out that analogy at all, we still come back to the great fundamental truth that in seeking Christ we get Christ's blessing; in going to the house of God we put ourselves in a right relation to spiritual benediction. The old phrase was, "We must use the means." I do not discard that phrase; there is in it a great deal of spiritual meaning. In the very act of reading the Bible we may catch the Biblical spirit, and yet in the very act of reading it in company with other people we may catch a spirit larger still than any we realise in strictly private meditation. A man says, "I can read the Bible alone." I reply, "Up to a given point; but you cannot read the Bible alone in the same sense in which you can read it as the common book, the family book, the world book; then when it is read in a multitudinous voice to the people on behalf of the people and for the instruction and comfort of the people there is a common sympathy, a common, a universal benediction." In seeking for Jesus, therefore, we must make no mistake as to His identity. I repeat, I have found Him in unexpected places. I have found Him often in the garden, I have seen Him often in the little creatures of the air that come roaming over God's garden to find what honey they can collect. I have desired to be as one of them. They do not elicit the poison, they elicit the honey; they have come for a given purpose, and that purpose is realised. So it must always be with my going to the garden of the house of God. I have come there to find Jesus, and have never missed Him when my spirit has been really sincere, determined. If I have gone to see some man or hear some man or enjoy some music or because of some accidental circumstance,

what wonder if I return disappointed, mocked, emptied? The issue is right. I tempt the Lord to answer me with His scoffing laughter. There is no mistake about Jesus being in the place or being near the heart; this is an identity that cannot be mistaken. It may take us some little time to localise and identify the personality, but we shall have a feeling that Someone is there or near or watching; words with which we have been perfectly familiar will be turned into new meanings, will burn with new ardour. Oh to have been with them when they stood in the shadows of descending evening! "Did not our heart burn within us?"—He never told us who He was, He never said a word about His locality, about His kindred, about His claim; He never mentioned Himself in any direct way, but His soul talked over all the plain of human history, and our hearts, which at first were almost ice, burned within us with a most holy glow. What fools we were! we ought to have known who He was; from the very tone of His voice we should have known the quality of His soul; come, arise, back to Jerusalem, and preach the resurrection of Christ. So it must always be.

Are we to-day seeking for Jesus? If we are seeking for Jesus in the right spirit and for the right purpose we shall surely find Him. What do you want Jesus for? The people in the text or in the context wanted Him for a base purpose; He said of them, "Ye have come not to seek Me in the true meaning of My personality, you are not coming after the spirit but after loaves and fishes; I know your purpose, I describe your motive to yourselves in words you cannot misunderstand." Now, we want to take these words and apply them to their highest level and significance. Do we really want Jesus because of the pressure of sin? Can we say, "Lord Jesus, Thou knowest we want to get rid of this heart-ache on account of our sins"? He will answer us before the prayer is out of our lips; He loves to interrupt penitential prayer. This is God's method. The poor prodigal was choking with his speech, and the Lord cut him short and said, "Bring forth the best robe and put it upon him, and put a

ring on his finger, and shoes on his feet, and bring forth the things for the glad feast, and let us be riotous in holy delight." Oh, think of Jesus interrupting penitential speeches, sending men away from His feet blessed before they got the prayer fully uttered in mere words: He knew the prayer from the very first term used. It is even so to-day. If you are a poor soul not gifted with words, with the mean gift of verbal expression, say, "Lord, save me or I perish," and before you get the last syllable right out of your mouth He will lift you up above the sin and take you with Himself where His plenteousness of grace abounds for your satisfaction. You might utter some little prayer, you really must have some jewel word with which to start the day; I do not want you to have page after page of the written record, I want you to have your word, your own little word, your own precious little jewel, your own dewdrop in the morning; and never tell anybody what it is; always have a secret you never divulge. I have had many secrets, the moment I have mentioned them I have lost them; I have had many sources of little power, and when I have told other people about them, no longer was I master of that conquering word. Keep something in your own soul; have a prayer that Jesus knows with a kind of tender familiarity, and you need not speak, you can be Hannah-like, you can be kneeling, and you can be seen muttering with your lips, but it would be even better not to have that muttering seen, as if the lips were closed against all language, and would never open again to speak one word. Only let the secret be between you and Jesus, and the rest will come by the grace of God.

Then the true resting-place in any discourse or meditation. Oh may we so live, and so act, and so serve, and so suffer, and so habituate our minds to the practice of doing all things in the name of Jesus, that when the last night comes we may be taken knowledge of by observing friends that we have been with Jesus; and may they be enabled to say, as we go quietly but certainly down the hill to the black river's brim, "He is seeking for Jesus."

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we have come in the name of Jesus Christ Thy Son to worship and adore our Father. We know the Way, the Truth, and the Life ; there is now a living way known to the heart, clear before the vision of love, and that way we would tread with most earnest and expectant desires. We thank Thee that the tabernacle of God is with men upon the earth ; we bless Thee for the Gospel in our mother tongue, and for the earlier tongue of the necessitous and hungry heart. We bless Thee for the Cross, we bless Thee for a living Jesus, accessible, sympathetic, enduring. What we have in Christ no tongue can tell : who can speak the measure of the heavens, and of the earth with all its seas and heights and depths? There is a fountain opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness and for everything that the heart can desire to make it fit and meet to be the bride of Christ. We have come up from the world into the quiet resting-place of the sanctuary ; of the world we are weary, its noise, its confusion, its disappointments, and its mockery, but in Christ we can find satisfaction, rest, rekindled hope, all that the poorest heart can desire in its deepest necessities. How pleasant are Thy courts, Thou Lord God of the universe ! We love their quietness, we are inspired by their music, we are comforted by their gracious solaces. We thank Thee that we are in Thy house now, that Thou art presiding over us with a most tender sovereignty, and we ask Thee for such enlargement of heart as shall give us enlargement of speech in lifting up our hymn before God and pouring out our desires before the throne. We desire a clean heart and a right spirit ; the blood of Jesus Christ Thy Son cleanseth from all sin, so we come to the opened fountain, unsealed by Thine own hand, and fed by Thine own heart. We desire more light concerning spiritual realities, concerning the kingdom that is above us and around us ; we desire to have clearer and keener vision of the things that are nigh at hand, lest by too eagerly stretching our expectation beyond unmeasured spaces we fail to see Thee in Thy daily and comforting providence. Make the house we inhabit Thy dwelling-place ; then shall it be a sweet home, a nest in the high trees, and a joy to the heart in all its trial and sorrow. We bless Thee that it is richer to be with chastening than to be without it ; we ask therefore for the sanctification of trouble and loss and pain and sense of helplessness ; may we know that the

more we need Thee the more we have Thee, and thus grant unto us the precious treasure of a contented and restful heart, seeing that our expectation is from Thine own hills, far beyond the clouds of time. We have come to ask of Thee defence, protection, guidance. We especially need protection and defence in the opening hours of life; then is the tempter hard upon us, then are temptations and seductions brought to play upon us with unceasing importunity, but Thy grace is greater than the enemy's hatred, and the solaces of Thy kingdom are greater than the strokes which he can inflict upon our weakness. We would hide ourselves in God, we would have no fear because we would have fulness and completion of faith. We have come to sing as it were a new song before Thee, for Thy mercies are new: Thy mercies come with the opal dawn and continue until the crimson sundown; all the day long Thou art with us, furnishing us with grounds for a nobler psalm and a more thrilling anthem. We give one another to Thy love; Thou knowest what each requires; the bitterness of the heart is known to the heart alone and to God. A wounded spirit who can bear? but that wounded spirit draws upon the fulness and the tenderness of Thy love. Have great mercy and gentleness in relation to those who look wildly around for one who is still absent. Thou knowest our frame, Thou rememberest that we are dust, and Thou art not hard upon us in consequence of our sorrow and our complaining. Let us feel to-day, not the greatness of Thy majesty, but the greatness of Thy pity, for us the greatest majesty of all. Amen.

CLV.

TELLING JESUS.

"*His disciples . . . went and told Jesus.*"—MATT. xiv. 12.

THEY told Jesus. They did something before that. They took up the body of their master, the Baptist, and buried it, and went and told Jesus. They were two men. They had conveyed and expressed the doubt of their imprisoned master; they said to Jesus, "Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another? This is our master's question,

and we wish to take back a reply." At the moment of the text their stern, austere, commanding master was dead, killed, beheaded by a cruel sword. When they took up the body and buried it they went and told Jesus; they who had once been the bearers of a doubt were now the bearers of a fact that did little to dissipate that doubt. They went from one master to another, and they went along the road of misery—a well-frequented path. They transferred their allegiance from the Baptist to the Saviour of the world, and they joined hands with Him, so to say, over the dead body of their master. They did not run away crying, We now see the vanity of this professed faith; there is really nothing in it; if there had been any governing Providence over the lives of men, our master would not have been in the grave to-day. They went from the greater to the Greatest; they went from a poor elementary creed into a great soul-satisfying faith. I wonder if the time will ever come when men will know the difference between creed and faith. A man may have a great creed as to words and have no faith as to conquest and rest in God. Will you throw your creeds away? I trust so. There are those who want to bind up the Church by theological trusts and covenants involving and implying penalties and all manner of legal contempt. Do not belong to such men. If the faith cannot take care of itself let it perish. Any faith that needs a trust deed is a poor faith. Who can be the custodians of the faith? Sooner be custodians of the heavens, or the tides that beat upon the sea-shore, of the air that makes the spring and the summer glad. There was faith in the apostles of John, though there was also at one time an elementary and plaguing doubt. They got over that; murder startles a man into a new conception of things. So long as we think that the royal head will continue in its noble sovereignty we feel more or less of indifference as to what becomes of certain intellectual and spiritual attachments; we have time to cherish doubts and to nourish some little mean suspicions called orthodoxy or heterodoxy, but in the presence of murder a man has no time to think about frameworks and apparatus and verbal orthodoxies. Blessed be any misery that brings me nearer my Lord.

Is this the only text in the New Testament which represents the truth that men come to Jesus Christ in trouble? It is not, but I think it is the jewel; I believe there is no brighter diamond in all the cabinet of grace. They came to Jesus in trouble; they had a tale to tell, they had a story full of blood to relate to this unique Listener. There are certain people to whom we do go in trouble; we go to them by a kind of natural right of instinct; we are sure they will understand, we are specially sure that they will listen to us: and there is a listening that is sympathy, and there is a sympathy that is a resurrection. They went and told Jesus. Why tell the Christ? Because He invited such stories, He looked as though He could be trusted on that ground; He would be no nuisance in a sick room, He would take up no room in the chamber of death, He would fill every corner of it with light. but would not make people uneasily conscious of His presence. How is it that we are always reading people in some way or other? We are reading one another in the great congregation; we read one another on the roadside, we read one another in the sick chamber, or in the house of merriment: all these environments bring out the qualities and characteristics of men. Would you speak to that man sitting in a place I need not identify—would you go to that man and tell him your trouble? No. Why not? I cannot put my reason into words, but I would go and tell him if I had come from the market-place and made a great bargain; the face of that man is eminently commercial, secular, mundane, telling about exchanges, stocks, prices, markets; he will listen all night, but there must be no tear in your voice if you have to retain that man's attention; he is a stranger, he is an exile. Why so? Because he has got rid of his soul. For ever? I do not say for ever, but let him be unclean until the evening. To that other man would you go in your trouble? Yes, I have been watching him all the time, I would like to go to him if I had any sorrow to tell; he would listen in a way that would almost totally dispel the grief. Why, how is that? It is so written on every feature of his face; specially is it written in the tones

of his voice. If I had a sorrow, I would venture to beckon to him to ask him for a private interview; I could tell him all. Who is he? A born priest; not official, not ordained by man's unclean palms, but he comes up from eternity, a priest to whom sorrow may tell its tale. These are the priests I love, these are the priests that sweeten society and that often make sorrow tolerable. They have such a way of listening; when I tell them my story they seem to have been there before me; a quarter of a century ago they suffered from the same lash, and their scars are their guarantees and their inspirations.

There must be something about the dear Jesus that drew everybody to Him who had a tale of sorrow to tell. Once a message was sent to Him to the effect that "he whom Thou lovest is sick." Why did they not go to some other man? Why did not the suffering sisters call in some neighbourly helper? No matter what his name or what his vocation, he is a man, he is human and by so much he will sympathise: go, tell him. Why go a mile or two when your neighbour is next door? Your neighbour may be a thousand miles away. Always discriminate between proximity and identity in all its deepest significance as a sympathetic ministry. What a tribute to Jesus that He could listen to men's trouble! Let such listening be one of His credentials. Few men can listen to moan or sigh or deep inspiration bearing upon the suffering heart; they do not like to be troubled; they say when Sorrow approaches their door, "Here that black gruesome thing comes again; I wish it would go elsewhere, I do not want to hear anything more that is really so depressing or so distressing." They were not born in Bethlehem; they who speak so know nothing about God, for God is love. Such people look out of their windows, and when they see the clown and his hoop they are full of joy—that is, their kind of joy, joy and water, joy and ditch-water, joy and aloes—a poor joy, but the only joy they in their present state of spiritual education can entertain or in any degree realise. Everybody went to Jesus with his trouble. It was a curious crew, a gang motley but significant, symbolic, having something in the soul of it that there was in no

other mob. There was the poor palsied man carried, there was the child vexed with a devil borne by its father, there was a leper, a physical blasphemy, an affront to nature, kindest, sweetest nature. There was the lame and the halt and the deaf and the blind and the dumb, and they are all going to one focal point. What to do? To tell their tale, and to leave their infirmities behind them.

Go to tell Jesus about your successes, is the second point, and that point we find in the evangelic narrative. The disciples returned to Him and said, "Master, even the devils were subject unto us through Thy name." See the radiance of their faces, see how they misconstrue the kingdom of heaven, see in what an elementary atmosphere they live and move and have their being. "Lord, even the devils." They thought He would applaud them, they thought He would stand up His full stature and say, "I told you it would be so, you must believe Me ever after this; this is exactly what I prophesied, and I call upon you to bear witness accordingly." That was not the Son of God. What did He do? He said, "Rejoice not that the devils are subject unto you, but rejoice rather that your names are written in the book of life"; and their brows fell, their chief toy was taken from them, they were disappointed. We always report the wrong thing. We tell of numbers, statistics, and balance-sheets, and great successes, and wonderful funds a quarter of a million strong, and half a million, and a whole million; and Jesus says, "Rejoice not in your million-fold funds, but rejoice rather that you have brought a blind soul into the light and a bound soul into liberty." Who thinks of these things? Who takes that side of the statistical life? You report thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions, and the quiet loving Jesus says, "You were rejoicing about the wrong thing; such joy may be a species of impiety; if beneath it and above it and all round about it there is a spiritual delight in spiritual results, then these other results may be acceptable to God, but, O my servants, remember that the thing to be overjoyed about is that your names are written in the Book of Life." How human, how divine, how condescending, how austere!

Then my third point is that they went and told Jesus about their zeal for His cause, they almost outran one another in the race; it was who was to be there first to tell Jesus all about it. About what? "Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and we forbad him." Jesus would be delighted, Jesus would say, "My dear allies and brethren, how faithful you are, how strongly I am lieutenanted by such men as you! You forbad the man who was casting out devils in My name; I congratulate you, I will telegraph this over all the spaces of the universe." Nothing of the kind; that was not the Son of God. He said, "Forbid him not"; He went dead against the whole policy of the crude, zealous, undisciplined disciples. They were always doing foolish things, they were often doing the wrong thing, they were prone to set the pyramid on its apex. The same spirit prevails to-day. Do not laugh at these centuries-old people, they are living now, all the men are living now. We say "The Scribes and the Pharisees," and we describe them—where? In a dictionary. Why buy a dictionary to find out who the Scribes and Pharisees are? They live next door to you, they live in your house; you are a Scribe, and you are a Pharisee, and I am a Sadducee. We so impoverish ourselves by putting centuries between us and these so-called ancient types. They are not ancient types; the Pharisee is here this morning, so is the publican, so is the broken-hearted woman who said in silence, "If I may but touch the hem of His garment I shall be made whole." They are all living; and yet it hath pleased certain men, high, adventurous minds, to put the Scribes and the Pharisees in a dictionary. This it is that makes the New Testament and the Old Bible to me the newest of all books, the mirror held up to the nature of the day. Blessed are they who are deeply learned in the spirit of the Bible, the spirit not taught in the schools, but taught in the secrecy of the sanctuary when the soul is closeted with the Holy Ghost.

We call the instances now collated for purposes of illustration local and passing instances. They are nothing of the kind; they are all re-enacted every day; the great austere leader is slain every morning and every night, and the blood never dries on the

floor of the world. And the sons and daughters of trouble are amongst us, and constitute the very cream and delight of our society, because of their need, their pain, their heroism, and their love of and search for Jesus. And yet what are the eternal principles ? where is the consciousness of Christ's supremacy in the Church ? Why go to Him ? Because He is the only one who can listen. He is the Head of the Church. What church ? The redeemed Church. Not the manufactured church, not the politically organised church, but His own Church, His own body ; for the apostle speaks of " His body, which is the Church." Have you trouble ? go, and tell Jesus, and tell Him before you tell anybody else ; and have a secret conspiracy with Christ to face the world, the flesh, and the devil in your dual, your united strength ; talk it out between yourselves, take your own way of talking it out ; hear sermons and read books only for the purpose of showing or observing how many ways there are of conferring with Jesus in trouble. It would be great poverty, utter destitution, if we could not, each in his or her own way, talk it out with Jesus, tell Him how it began, tell Him how much you yourself are the cause of all the trouble. When I think that Jesus is dealing hard with me, considering the space of my life and the infirmity of my nature, I go back upon the secret causes—what was done fifty years ago ; this may be the crop. Some crops take half a century to grow. I had forgotten that seed-time, but now I remember it ; I did that evil deed fifty years ago, and to-day Christ says, Put in the sickle, thrust it into the corn, into the tares, into the poison, and rip it down, and go home and swallow it all. That would be just, but Jesus is more than just ; He is kind, He is kind to the unthankful and to the evil, and from the garden of the atheist He will not withhold the gracious rain of His impartial clouds. Then I must not go to His criticism. To what then ? To His tears, to His pity ; catch Him when He stoops lowest. He is hard upon me. No, He is not ; five-and-twenty years ago I told a lie, and this is the crop, and I cannot get another man to sickle it down for me. I want to ask for some great covering material that can cover the crop over. It is no use covering

over the crop, you must get at the root. Learn a word to-day—eradication. You know the meaning of it in the dictionary, but I want you to learn the moral and spiritual meaning, and I want to learn that moral and spiritual meaning myself; for it was my lie, and it is my crop. Eradication—thrust in the iron instrument, and lift up the root, and turn it to the blazing sun, and let that judicial fire be as hell to that awful root. There must be no tampering and no compromising and no half-forgetting; it must be real, radical, thorough, out-and-out work, or it is labour lost. I feel that Jesus was hard upon me in taking away this or that delight. No, He was not, and I know it, because I did something which, being spelled out in daily providences, means exactly this. Be it a grave of hot ashes because some palace of my ambition has been burnt down: I did it, and I want to throw it off my shoulders on to the shoulders of God, but He will not have it so. He is a just God; at times, a consuming fire: yet God is love.

These instances are not local and special, but they are instances which point to the eternal sympathy of Christ with all who are in trouble. He gets behind the furthest point we can back ourselves upon; He says in effect, My dear children, you are quite right; do not lose that spirit of self-reproach; it is disciplinary, and to a large extent curative; hold on, but behind all that there is a divine purpose. Was there a divine purpose in my sinning? There may be. How can that be explained? It cannot be explained; God can never be explained, although we have some cynics who want to have Him explained, and then they will accept Him. God will not accept the terms. If He were explicable He would be non-existent: to understand God we must be God. And yet somehow even Paul wrestled with that problem and sometimes was on the point of giving it up, for he was both Calvinist and Arminian, he was both just as severe as righteousness, and as gentle as mercy. And God says to me, deep, deep down in the chambers of my soul, "All this will receive light later on; we pass through the grave into the larger school; there we shall be able to take in more field, there we shall

be better able to understand the critical and refined and spiritual relations of things; then filaments shall be to us stronger than bars of steel, then there may be some light cast upon what is a troublous problem now." So I am waiting; I ask if my sin will be explained. He says, "There is no need to explain your sin, you can get rid of that now, do not reserve it for eternity; it was intended that sin should die on Calvary." Is it not most mysterious? It is verily so; but a religion without mystery is a religion without comfort and without inspiration, a piece of furniture, which I can buy, sell, dispose of, and arrange according to the fancy of the moment. I must live in eternity, I must have nothing to do with these little clicking details, I must take in more space, more duration; but I must get rid of my sin, for that has been appointed of God. Sin is destructible, Christ can take away the sin, and the more my sin is taken away the less I shall cry out after some intellectual explanation. Jesus Christ sympathises with me; that is enough in the meantime; because He sympathises I will go to Him. I do not go to Him to excite His sympathy, I go to Him to receive it. Saith the apostle, "Casting all your care upon Him"—why? "For." or because, "He careth for you." Not because He is great, majestic, infinite, incomprehensible; these are more or less empty words in such circumstances as my soul's need. But the apostle says, "Go to Him because He wants you to go, because He is waiting for you to go, take all your tears and leave them with Him, all your sorrow, for, because, He careth for you." The shepherd that cares for the flock will abide with it all the night, though the wind be troubled by the howling of the wolf. Friends, brothers, sisters, when we are in great trouble, let us go and tell Jesus.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the Triune God, abide with us, till in a fairer land we tell everything to Jesus. Amen.

[*Thursday Morning*, 18*th July*, 1901.]

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we thank Thee that we have heard the sweet Gospel that Jesus Christ saved others, Himself He could not save. The Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. There is born unto us, day by day, in all the sunny summer and in all the icy winter, One that is called Saviour of the world. We bless Thee for this continuous Bethlehem. May Christ be born in our hearts, the hope of glory; may He be cradled in our trust and love; may we wait for Him and welcome Him, the One Saviour, the infinite Redeemer. We thank Thee that we have heard of Christ; He is not known in some tongues, but by Thy grace and strength we will make Him known. Send out Thy light and Thy salvation, and give Thy saints faith in the Cross. The Lord send upon us a light above the brightness of the sun, and make this sevenfold noonday a great light without scorching heat, a blessing, a smile, a presence divine. Amen.

CLVI.

FIXING OUR OWN EVIDENCES.

"*That we may see and believe.*"—MARK xv. 32.

THIS is an old trick of the devil. He never had any other trick. He is by no means original or mentally fertile; he keeps turning over the three or four hot cinders with which he has been trying to burn the universe. He gets no further on; the sparks flee away from him as soon as they see him.

"That we may see and believe": here you have a pack of men who are setting up their own standard of evidence. What a proud "we" was that; what a blind "see" was that; what an impossible "believe" was that! Observe their line of reasoning: they charged Jesus Christ to do something of their own fixing in order that *they* might see and believe. They would arrest the universe in order that

they might get a first-class seat upon any chariot that was driving towards the gratification of selfish conceit and desire. Allow me to ask you to bind your minds down to the point; not because it is the old point, but because it is your point, and my point, and the point that hinders the kingdom of God. "Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the Cross"—why?—"that we may see and believe." Here, let us repeat—for the repetition is itself a discourse—here are men who are fixing their own evidences, setting up their own standards, applying their own tests; not men twenty centuries old, but the men of to-day, the blasphemy of the hour. Were they so anxious to see and believe that they would call upon God to arrest the sun and the moon upon the hills of time? Certainly not; they were not anxious to believe, they did not want to believe, but they wanted to gratify a conceit or to satisfy a fancy or an ambition; they wanted to create a new anecdote, saying, "We said, if He would come down from the Cross we would see it and believe Him"; and God sent upon them a great negative, a contemptuous denial. None can be so deaf as God. We must take care how we set up our own little schools of evidence and our small little bodies of apologies for the deity of Christ and the redeeming efficacy of His Cross.

If God once allowed that, where would the trick stop? That is what we must consider. You cannot do a thing by itself, and leave it alone, detached, and unrelated. Everything came from something else and means something more; hence the need of caution. God could not stoop to begin the little game of compromise, saying, in effect, "My dear sirs, I am so anxious that you should see and believe, that I will for the moment arrest the career of the universe, and gratify you with an answer to your conceit." This is what we are asking Him every day to do; we are asking Him to send us fine days that we may gather in our harvest, then we will believe in Him; we are asking Him to do this and that miracle in the course of time, and then we will offer Him the patronage of our satisfied conceit; and God will not. It is not His way of self-vindication, He has

another way, and we must fall into it. It is the stone in one of two relations: our falling upon it and being saved, or its falling upon us and our being pulverised. It is not God that changes. How very innocent it appears on the part of these men! They were, so to say, going about their daily business, and by chance they caught sight of this poor Nazarene nailed to the Cross, with five wounds in hand and feet and brow and side, and they said, "Oh, by the way, we have forgotten this for the moment; now, King of Israel, come down, that we may see and believe." Many men want these little parenthetic miracles wrought in their lives; they are craving for these interstitial divine indications and expositions, and God will not give them—never. We should be godlier far if we did not seek for them, for we should have more time to pray and more time to serve, and less time to doubt and controvert.

Let me fix your minds down to the point that we cannot stop at any one definition of evidence, even if God were to grant it to us. He would not satisfy us, He would awaken and provoke a still keener and fouler temptation. I wish men could see these things; it would make men of them; it is so solid, so philosophical, so comprehensive. Surely God might do it, in this instance; here is a child of mine who is very dear to me, but very obstinate towards all religious truths, and he says that if God will only grant him one, just one, proof, according to the boy's own idea of proof, he would believe. Would he? Forsooth! *he* would believe! Oh universe, hear it, and deny the fool's request. Suppose Christ had come down from the Cross, and said, "You have mockingly prayed Me to leave this place of crucifixion and sorrow, you have promised that if you see Me come down from the Cross you will believe; now I am so anxious to multiply believers that I will come down and get up again, in order that you may believe." Is that the Christ way? Is this the Jesus stoop? It is not; it never was; it cannot be to-day. Why, if He had come down from the Cross and allowed these men to have their way, they could not believe; it is not given to some men to believe, any more than it is to pray, or to poetise, or to paint, or to love. What would

have happened? This would have happened in other quarters: a new standard of morals would have been set up; some, passing by old serrated Sinai, would say, "If you will drop those Ten Commandments and approve ten that I have written out in their place, I would not mind believing you." That is what would come of it in the first instance. Having changed the method of atonement, we would change the method of ethics. I am afraid that word "ethics" will ruin some souls. It hides itself in somewhat of a modified Greek form, it is often taken for English, which it never was and never can be, and it is always anxious in some way to modify the tragedy of the Gospel. It is so with regard to the Cross, the crucifixion, the flowing blood, the pierced side, and all that seems to constitute the idea of the Atonement. We deprecate the further use of such terms; what we want is not indeed the Ten Commandments, they are rough and crude, adapted probably to a very low state of civilisation; what we want is "a philosophic ethic." And the Lord, the same Lord, will not let them have it. "A philosophic ethic" never could save a soul, for not a soul knows what it means, and it is a thing that changes itself or its colour, chameleon-like, from age to age.

This is what would happen: these men would run about saying, "We told Him that if He would come down from the Cross, we would see the descent, and we would believe because we saw it." The eye never saved a soul, the eye is a poor instrument at best; the human may probably be the very poorest of eyes in the higher classes of animals. There is a way which the eagle knoweth not, and there is a path which the vulture's eye hath not seen, and there are paths and ways and courses of development which no human eye can see; it is the soul that sees. But this is what would happen, instead of its being an easy little arrangement, which of course you see the common sense of, We Scribes and Pharisees and all sorts of learned and pedantic people, we simply said, that if He would come down, we would believe it. But the matter cannot end there. They will next go to the Beatitudes, and say, "Now, if you will alter these

Beatitudes, we may believe in you. Why talk so much about the meek and the merciful and the peace-loving and the pure in heart and the poor in spirit? Now we have in our organised counsel agreed upon a set of beatitudes; if you will accept those beatitudes as indicating a higher civilisation than your own, we will subscribe them, publish them, seal them." And the Lord will not. He has never revised His Sermon on the Mount, He has never published it with emendations; He has never said that on the whole He has come to take a somewhat different view of the beatific life, and now, condescending to the level of the present civilisation, He has thought it well to adopt another series of beatitudes, more adapted to the age, more up to date. The Lord will not. Though a hundred critics, multiplied by themselves, and reduplicated, and squared and cubed up to untold and unspeakable millions, were to ask Him just to alter one of the Beatitudes, and they would all come to the Church at once, and drink the sacramental and memorial blood, He would not change jot or tittle of His delivered Gospel. That philosophy remains, that evangel cannot be substituted, cannot be replaced, displaced, superseded.

Nor would the matter end there. If the Lord once gave way, we do not know to what extent He might proceed, because the people would say, "If you will alter the whole course of providence as we have known it, we shall in all probability believe in you. The course of providence is so perplexing and so bewildering we really cannot penetrate and understand it. Now if you could make things easier in that direction—here, there's my hand!" Poor, foul hand thrust into the unopened palm of the Deity! "If you will make the things in providence a little smoother and simpler, I would not mind attaching myself to any church; in fact you might fix the church yourself; I am so anxious to confer my faith and patronage on the eternal Providence. Oh, if it will do exactly what I will think ought to be done, there's my hand!" Now this is a historical fact, and being historical it is philosophical, with a great moral meaning in its soul, namely, that Jesus Christ never

did respond to any test set by the enemy, set by anybody. He does not accept suggestions, He reveals truths. Never in one case did Jesus accept anybody's suggestion; that was the divine autocracy; it points to a further yet humbler autocracy. You must at one point come upon authority. You hate that word—why? It is an innocent word, and we cannot get rid of it. How do you make that out? Easily. You have authority in your own house; perhaps you are the authority, and therefore do not complain of it: that would alter matters very much. Many a man objects to the pope who would not hesitate to be the pope; perhaps he would disdain the title, perhaps he would wash his hands of the whole historic tradition, but for all that, and even in a Dissenting pulpit, he might be the pope. We must be very careful how we condemn. We must come upon authority. Where? In Parliament. The vote was taken but yesternight, or fifty years ago, and there were thirty-four for it and fourteen against it, and the Speaker said, "The Ayes have it." Have what? Have the authority, the decision, the point of settlement. We must have authority—where? In the little chapel meeting. How so? By the majority; the minister does not like it, and some of the leading officers do not like it, but the matter was put to the vote, and there were twenty for it and seven against it, and the twenty settled the case. We must come upon authority; you can vary the name, and you can dissociate or reattach the traditions, but authority, even autocracy, in the form of a majority, you must have. Jesus Christ therefore was a divine Autocrat, in the sense that He accepted no suggestions; He did not follow examples, He set them. That is what the Church ought to do to-day. Poor, wondering old woman is the Church, of all creeds, communions, and all possible organisations and institutions; she waits to hear how things are going; then she will come forward and say, "This is the way you must go"—as if she had devised it. She is a fine listener, and has an immense gift of hypocrisy. You must therefore have authority. Christ had it, and therefore He never responded to any test set by the enemy or set by the half-trained disciples. Christ never fell into an intellectual man-trap; He laid down the law, He expounded the kingdom, He spoke in the

imperative; in the subjunctive or the potential He could not speak, He was free of all that limited and hesitant grammar. The devil in the wilderness set Him a case-trap; He said, "Forty days have elapsed since you had anything to eat; now, if Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread; excuse me, that is my suggestion, I think it is simple, beneficent, and practical; if Thou be the Son of God, why hunger any more? make these stones loaves, make this wilderness a harvest-field." Just what the men said at the Cross: "If Thou wilt come down, if Thou be the Son of God and the King of Israel, come down, that we may see and believe: there is nothing very harmful about that suggestion, we are full of pity for Thy great wounds; now come down, if Thou be the King of Israel, and we will see the descent and believe in the miracle." Just what the devil said in other words; they have only one suggestion, and it is a poor trick. Did Jesus Christ accept the suggestion of the enemy in the wilderness? He said—what a philosophy it was that He spake in that grand retort—"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God": a new conception of life, an enlargement of our limited view of bread, of substance, of tables and dinings. Christ in effect swept all these out of the way, saying, "Man shall live by every word, every kind of method divinely conceived and divinely provided: away!"

And others came and said, "Now if you would do just one more miracle, one more, that is all we ask for, and if granted to us, so that we could have time to watch it, time to see it all through—do not be so quick, take our beat, go at our pace—we will believe," and Jesus never did it; He never accepted a suggestion, He never begged bread of any soul. And others again said, "These commandments are too severe, they are really more than flesh and blood can stand, will you not modify them a little? instead of carrying a cross on our shoulder, a great heavy tree, would it not be well to wear some kind of ornamental cross? now we could upon a finger-ring have the signet of a cross, we could button-hole the entire conception of this tragic gospel by putting a little something with a cross stamped in the middle of it in our

garments, and people would see in a moment what we were. If that could be done, well, it would be good for trade, it would stir up fertile, imaginative ideas, and bring all sorts of intellect into the market for the purpose of making new insignia and new badges of our faith in Thee." And He said, "Except a man deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me, he cannot"—that "cannot" is not a word, it is a philosophy—"he cannot be My disciple."

Many have suggested short and easy methods of proving this and that. Jesus Christ never adopted one of them. They treat Jesus Christ as if He knew nothing about these things; whereas He lived before the universe lived. They seem to think that if He would only accept their ideas, their short and easy methods, all would instantly rise and follow Christ, and make the welkin ring with thunderous acclamation. That is not my Lord's way, He must have some deeper, subtler, more refined spiritual way than that. For example, say those who are poorly inventive in their imagination and yet audacious in their suggestions to the divine mind, "Now if an angel would come out some summer day when all the sky was one blaze of glory, and just turn the light off, the world would be converted in five seconds." I wonder that Jesus Christ, say they in effect, never thought of that; it has apparently wholly escaped the divine mind; but if an angel should set himself in the middle of the sun, and putting out his hands should quietly close them upon the fiery orb and make a hot cinder of it, all the heathen would give up their idols, and give up at once. As if God did not know all about such processes! We think in our intellectual crudeness that if He would do what we have suggested there would not be a wicked man on the face of the whole earth. Or, bringing down the sphere of operations, if it could be made clear, perfectly clear, that if you were an atheist there would be no rain on your fields, but if you attend the same church as I attend, you would have all the rain you want—now if that could be arranged, why, we should have the whole world following this great faith. But your Father which is in heaven is kind to the unthankful

and to the evil, He sendeth His sun to shine upon the just and the unjust, and He sends down His impartial rain on the field of the loveliest saint, and on the meadow of the most blatant atheist. What a wonder it is that the divine mind never thought of this! You see, outside people know far more about things than the Lord evidently does, and we could immediately submit to Him a programme which would send the angels into ecstasy and make the earth one field of roses. Oh, how poor we are in our intellectual conceptions and our moral sensitiveness! Here we are born into a great scheme and system of things, and the first thing we do in our living school is to try to mend it. The schoolboy says before he has quite passed from the jacket to the coat that on the whole if the Lord would act upon his suggestion and simply take up an atheist every now and then half way between earth and heaven and dash him to the ground, He would convert the world in no time. That is what the Lord does not want to do. It is by another method that my Lord moves, it is a slow, slow method, but it is His method, and, being His, it must be right.

Once there was a suggestion made from a very peculiar quarter which evidently was much thought of by the man who made it; he wished to see something done, and to have it done in a peculiarly startling way; he was not afraid of sensationalism, he thought it was the right ism in the circumstances; so he said, "Father Abraham, send Lazarus to my father's house, and let him tell my five brethren how the case stands now so far as I am concerned, and they will all believe." Abraham said, "They have Moses and the prophets; if they believe not them, neither would they believe even should one rise from the dead." On the first blush of the case the man tormented and crying out for pity and for cooling water seemed to be right, but they know better in heaven; they see all things more clearly, more comprehensively, they are more interested in earthly affairs, notably in the affairs of salvation, progress, and sanctification, than we are; yet this was the solemn and tremendous answer: "They have Moses and the prophets, let them believe them; if they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe though one rose from the

dead." This was spoken without hesitation, as if it were interpreting a great scheme and plan of things, of which God was the author and the head. This, my brethren, is true to-day.

From the beginning man has had everything that was necessary to redemption and salvation. Once a lawyer thought not; he conceived the idea that the divine revelation would be vexed by cross-examination, and he said, "Master, which is the great commandment of the law?" Jesus answering said unto him, "How readest thou?" The answer was given before the question was asked; there is no need for such questions, they have all been anticipated. "Lawyer, how readest thou?" "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and mind and strength." "Very good," said Christ, "I add nothing to it, there is no need to add anything to it; I came to see the law fulfilled, the written law turned into unwritten life. This do, and thou shalt live." But the lawyer still thought that his plan was the best; so did they on Calvary, they said, "O Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save Thyself and come down from the Cross; we would thus put Thee to the test; Thou claimant of the highest throne in Jewry, come down!" The suggestion was not accepted; it was like Christ not to answer foolish, frivolous, and conceited questions.

When Herod heard that Jesus Christ was in the house he was "exceeding glad"—these are the words. "Now," said he, "I shall see great things done by this man, I shall have Him to-day all to myself, I will admit nobody to the sanctuary; I will see exactly what His credentials are, what His personality is, I will ask Him questions, I will ask Him to produce one miracle after another upon my table, and I will analyse and create my own impressions concerning this man's credentials. O Thou King of the Jews, art Thou the King of the Jews?" No answer. "Wilt Thou do one mighty work for me under this my roof?" No reply. "Knowest Thou not that I have great power?" No answer, no cringing of weakness. Herod was exceedingly astounded; he had in the house a deaf and dumb man. None can be so dumb

as God; and He went out of the house without having left a single mighty work behind Him. And yet He would come into my house, into this or that man's little house by the wayside, and He would sit there all day and all night, and talk the divine poetry, and reveal the divine philosophy, and find His way into the needy and guilty heart, and touch it with the catharism of His blood. It is so. To Herod, to Pharisee, to haughty critic, He has nothing to say. "To this man will I look, to the man that is of a humble and contrite heart, and that trembleth at My word." That is right. It sounds divine; it is grand beyond all other grandeur. I have only to have a broken heart, and the Lord will come into the shattered house, and rebuild it, and make it glorious with a new light. Men, hear this, and be men!

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the triune God, abide with us in all the stress and battle and sorrow of life, till on tired eyes there softly lies the stillest of all slumbers. Amen.

WORDS FOR PREACHERS.

"Eloquence and other liberal arts are to be likened to that part of the carpenter's wimble which turneth about, goeth round, and by little and little draweth in the iron or steel bit. The wooden handle entereth into the wood, but wreatheth in the piercer: so do those arts, if they be rightly used, further the understanding of the word of God."—*Jewel*, 1522-1571.

"The bees labour diligently to get food for the supply of their young; they bring it home to the hive, and lay it up in the comb; but, alas! they are yet never the better for it, for they are fixed in their cell, they cannot stir forth to take it: therefore they do more, they bring them food and put it into their mouths, as oft as they need. The reason why men's hearts are not wrought upon in the ministry of the word is, because many ministers labour not the right way to show men their sins and to convince their consciences; they insist only in generals, whereas a particular application brings every man his part and portion, and not only sets the dish before him, but cuts him meat and carves it for him."—*Purchas*, 1577-1628.

We may and must preach the law as the necessary means to drive souls out of themselves to Christ in the Gospel. The Gospel is the net with which we should catch souls, and draw them out of their sinning, sinking state. But how shall we get them to come into it? Truly never except we first beat the river with the law's clubs (threatenings I mean). Sinners lie in their lusts as fish in the mud, out of which there is no getting them but by laying hard upon their consciences with the threatenings of the law. "*Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound*," that is, in the conscience by conviction, not in life by commission and practice. The law shows both what is sin, and also what sin is. I mean it tells when we commit a sin, and what a hateful and dangerous thing we do in committing of it; how we alarm God, and bring Him with all His strength into the field against us. Now this is necessary to prepare a way for the sinners entertaining the Gospel. The needle must enter before the thread with which the cloth is sewed. The sharp point of the law must prick the conscience before the creature can by the promises of the Gospel be drawn to Christ. The field is not fit for the seed to be cast into it till the plough hath broken it up. Nor is the soul prepared to receive the mercy of the Gospel till broken with the terrors of the law. —*Gurnall*, 1617-1679.

[*Sunday Morning, 21st July*, 1901.]

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, this is the day Thou hast made, we will rejoice and be glad in it. The day which the builders rejected has become the bright day of the week. We bless Thee for the day which shuts out all other days and shines upon our souls with a peculiar glory. We know it is Thy day; we know it by the light, we know it by the peace, we know it because there steals into our heart a new joy. We thank Thee for the curtain that veils off the week, that shuts it up amidst its own kind, and on this side of that screening curtain we find the jewel of God's own time. Make us glad in Thy day, glad in Thy house, glad in Thy great deep peace. We thank Thee that Thou hast given us a day in which to study ourselves and to study God; we bless Thee for the one-subject day, it refreshes us, it ennobles us, it says to us, Get ye up into the high mountains. May we not be fools and squander time, may we distinguish between the vile and the precious, may we throw no pearl away. Come to us, we humbly pray Thee, in our weakness and in our distress, which is sometimes sevenfold in weight and in darkness. Why not dig a well for us that we may sit near it? Thou hast dug many wells, and we are now able, according to the measure of Thine own love, to drink abundantly, to the fertilising and refreshing of our lives. Thou dost give spring water, and water that springeth up into everlasting life. Thou dost not cause them to thirst who drink of the river of God, which is full of water. We represent many cases; we look well, but we are ill, every soul amongst us; we seem as if we had outrun the devil, but we feel his breath panting upon our necks. It is a world of temptation and difficulty, training and discipline; may we through the power of the Cross of Christ, in whose name we approach Thee, have strength to accept the life in all its meaning, yea, even in its gloom and burdensomeness, and get something out of it that will help us to a life broader and deeper. Behold, Thou hast set all things in vanity: how is the fine gold become dim; how is the giant reeling in his strength, knowing that his time is fast drawing near; how we count our gold lest since yesternight we have lost any of it. We fear for ourselves, and for the child, and for the household, and for the old man, and for the business, and for the life that sweetens all other life. It seems grim, the gruesomeness of it would overpower us, but for the Cross, the redeeming blood, the inspiring Spirit, the united Godhead. Thou knowest the wound that is in the middle of every heart, Thou knowest the ghost that may at any time become

an arresting agent, laying our life low and blotting out all the light we ever had. And some are strong, not knowing that they are weak; and some are laughing, in whose life there is no real laughter; and some are mourning and moaning and fearing, when there is no need for it all. God of love, in the power of Christ, come to us, lest we be overborne and trodden under foot. Why not give us all this one day's real deep gladness? It might convert our souls, it might destroy our fears, it might give us a sense of heroism in the power of Christ. Wilt Thou then this one Sabbath summer day give all them that love Thee a whole holiday? Our souls are sadly distressed, our sins persist in rising from the grave in which Thy love has buried them, and we dare not go out after the shadow-time because all things look as if they were alive with terror; but we want the one day, the golden day, the jewel day.

Lord, hear us, because we ask it all at the Cross and in the King's own name. Amen.

CLVII.

VOX CLAMANTIS.

"*What shall I cry?*"—ISAIAH xl. 6.

THE voice did not say, Invent a cry of your own. You cannot teach the pulpit that truth; you cannot get the Church to understand that solemn doctrine. We rather resent the suggestion that we need authority; but we cannot escape it. I wonder if you really hear that startling statement in your hearts: we cannot escape authority. We must either originate or derive it. Fool is he who originates his own authority, and wise beyond all wisdom is he who goes into the inner places and says every time, "What shall I cry?" Again and again we have sought to show that we cannot escape authority. There be those creatures, living creatures, who say that they will not be subject to authority. They talk wind, without one stray note of music in it. There is authority at home, authority in business,

authority in Parliament, authority in the Church, authority in everything, now going by one name and now going by another, but all the time there. There must be some central office amongst those mocking stars —mocking without the office, but smiling and singing with the office. We hear much about the right of private judgment—where is it? what is it? of what is it composed? The atmosphere has broken up privacy; it is a new air; that which was once whispered down in the cellar, the darksome cellar, is now singing on the house-top, and we never sent it there. What is this private conscience, private judgment? There is no privacy; it is God's own voice; everything is heard, and everything is shaped by a curious intermixture which cannot be diagnosed, analysed, laid out in little pieces, and understood. What about all these ghostly influences, all these spiritual voices, all these trooping and urgent suggestions, beating upon the door of the intellect and demanding admission, for the King's business requireth haste? If any man is living a little red-herring life of absolute privacy, or attempting to do so, he is cutting off all his holidays, he is not only abridging his summer, he is destroying it in darkness. We live in one another, we draw cheques upon one another, cheques of confidence and of suggestion and of new impulse and of better, deeper, and larger life. It is a wondrous co-partnery. We must therefore in broader light and fresher air revise some of our old idol words and get words that better fit the new revelation, the new inquiry and problem, of every century.

I would like to see the Church, all the churches of Christ, holding their tongues until they had been shut up with the Lord, asking Him, "What shall we cry?" What did the voice say? It said, "Cry!" But that would be startling. Certainly. That would be fatal to slumber. No doubt; I never knew the Lord approve much sleeping; He does assign a few hours to rest, but it is a cluster of hours in which perhaps little else could be done. He is covetous of the daylight, He is miserly of the opportunity; He says, "Buy it up, buy it, seize it, have it, work while it is called day, even if it be so called by a stretch of imagination; make the light go as

long and as far as you can." What does the Church or the individual messenger say? He says, "Lord, I have heard the voice, *vox clamantis in deserto*, and it said to me, 'Cry.' Now I have come to say in prayer, 'What shall I cry?' Make the sermon, and I will deliver it; give me the message, and I, with hesitation and stumbling it may be, will do my very best to deliver it; but I have no sermon, I have no message, I do not originate, I come to Thee, Thou digger of wells and Thou maker of springs of water, to be refreshed, strengthened, and made fit for the message delivered and for the whole task and joy of life." We say that we did not like the sermon; then one of two things must have happened: first, either it was the man's own sermon, and therefore not worth hearing, or, secondly, the message, which is the soul of the sermon, was left out, and still more worthless. Like the sermon? O, the folly, the madness, the insult to the altar. There are no sermons, they are cries, cries at a bidding, messages that have a divine origin, great visions, kindled from on high. The man is not there, but the Word is, the Word of the Lord is there, the eternal message, the doctrine that cannot be shaken.

I wonder if Christ would have said, "I would take a draught of water from you, but I don't like the vessel; I can only drink out of gold, or silver certainly, not out of that rude thing of yours; I will go back to the city and bring up a proper vessel; I would not mind refreshing My thirst and cooling this hot summer that burns Me." Did He talk so? What did He want? He wanted the water, not the vessel. When the Church wants the water, the substance, the gift of God, the Lord will not disregard the supplication of His people. "What shall I cry?" The Lord says, Do not ask that question first; I have told you to cry; now you can ask the question, second, What shall I cry? But we must have the cry, the shout, the prayer that is so terribly alive that it will take the kingdom of heaven by violence. We must have these fever cries, these hot pulses, these shoutings without prompting. We have songs without words, why not have a cry religious without dogma? Cries have

meanings, voices have significations. You say, "I heard a noise." No, there are no noises; they are voices, they are forms of music, they are operations upon that most wondrous of all instruments, the human soul. We do not love the cry. The great compliment that is now paid to a sermon is that it was so very quiet; it was so that Nineveh was shaken into penitence by Jonah whispering, mumbling, under the spouts of the city, that in forty days Nineveh would be destroyed. He spoke so quietly, so whisperingly, the watchman passing along his shadow did not hear it; he thought he heard something, but Jonah retired to early rest without having turned a hair, without a nerve having been shaken, without any depletion of mental or physical energy having taken place. He said as he passed through the streets, "Forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed," and they said he was so quiet, so very quiet, they could fall asleep under his lulling voice. Then Jonah was a traitor, the Lord never told him to mumble so; the Lord said, "Go, cry unto Nineveh, that great city, Forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed." We may not have lost the message, and yet we may have lost the right way of delivering it. It would be possible so to read or speak even a great or true doctrine that not a soul would believe a word you said. The first business is in the cry, poignant, piercing, thrilling cry. No man goes about the streets whispering "Fire, fire, fire." He would be passed by with a smile as an innocent lunatic. It is not so that earnest men announce fire. It is not so that the general orders his soldiers, he does not whisperingly say, "Fire." That would be a tone to rouse an army; of course every soldier would instantaneously reply in a storm of fire? No, he would not; the soldier would know that the general did not mean it. How do you know he did not mean it? I know by his tone; no man could be earnest and speak in that way. There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. The dog knows when you mean it. O Church of the living God, mean it, or let it alone. An honest blundering atheist is better than an insincere and mocking Christian.

This inquiry for authority is well known by those

who read the Scripture. There was a time when the Lord said unto a shepherd man, "Go to Egypt." Why? "I have heard the cry of My people, the cry of pain, the cry of outraged humanity, the cry of instinctive justice: come, I will send thee, go thou to Egypt." And Moses said what the prophet said, "Who sends me? What shall I say or cry if the people ask for my authority, if they ask my name? Shall I say that I am sent anonymously, or shall I be qualified, quiet, and empowered in every sense and degree by the possession of a name?" And the Lord said, "Certainly, certainly I will be with thee; if they ask the name, say I AM THAT I AM"—a nameless name, an ocean pool, an Atlantic dewdrop. "If they say again, 'Who sent thee?' say I AM sent thee"—the verb, the one verb, the only verb, the seed verb, irregularly conjugated, but coming out in all its moods and tenses with terrible and expressive emphasis. Still, the point is Moses had his authority; he did not say, "Well, if these brethren of mine are suffering I will go down and look into the case, and I will call, as far as I can call, some sort of convention amongst these people and pass a few resolutions." Resolutions never did much for the world, because a real resolution is an affair of the heart, is an expression of the blood; and to see how men, Christian men, pass resolutions by holding up the right hand! They should hold up their hand in another way, a much stronger hand, a manlier hand. Oh the hypocrisy of those who vote for resolutions without knowing what they are! What wonder if the blood of these resolutions has fallen in trickles along the street in which the meeting-house stood in which they were passed? You can only pass a resolution by crying out, being in it, incarnating it, carrying it by loss of blood. That is what the Church wants—I mean all the Church, in all its sections, divisions, phases, and relationships.

Moses and Jonah represent some far-away aspect of what may be called divine equipment and authority, but every one of us can in his own measure and his own way receive from God the same holy authority. When I hear a man who is trying to impose on me

some trick of speech, I invariably stop mine ears and get away from the trickster; he must speak blood, every sentence must be a hot spark, the whole action must be that of urgency, for the enemy is behind, or on one side, or in front, and not a moment must be lost—To your tents, O Israel! We now go to our drawing-rooms; it is not a fair exchange. We are too comfortable, too feathery and velvety; we have lost a great deal in losing the old vehemence and the old scorn. It is all evil. Take care! There is time now for repentance. There is a great amount of leeway to be made up.

Now what was this man told to cry? It was a curious message, and yet it contained everything. He was to proclaim evanescence and eternity, he was to proclaim a universal message and give a particular application. "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth"—that is the evanescence. The clock strikes, eternity never strikes; time must chatter, eternity must be silent. He was then told to complete his message respecting evanescence by delivering a message respecting permanence—"but the word of our God shall stand for ever." The withering grass—the standing word; these two things abide to-day; they represent time, space; the measurable, the immeasurable; the fading, and the amaranthine. It is just so now; in these two grand propositions you have everything you want: diligently inquire into them, search into them, and apply them, and you have sermons for ever. If all flesh is grass, we had better fall to praying, because the praying time is very limited, the grass does not take a long time to wither. "The grass withereth"—if it be so let us be up and doing, with a heart for everything, because the time is short, the opportunity lingers but for a moment, and every wise man says, "I am a stranger, I am a pilgrim, I can tarry but a night; wake me before the sun is waked."

What a wondrous ministry, then, it was, though

it seem so simple and almost so shallow and so utterly commonplace. Brethren, there is nothing commonplace that God has spoken; you have missed the flash of fire, you have missed the soul of poetry, every word that is said by God is as it were God Himself. When God would represent Himself to those who are flesh and of the time-day, He said, "The Word was in the beginning, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Before there was anything built there was a Word to build it. The plan came before the edifice; the architect dreamed before the builder bought his bricks. It is thought, the Logos, the Word, the metaphysic, that lies beyond and behind everything; and for want of knowing that we have been stumbling and blundering all our days. If we had known this, we would have hidden ourselves in God.

Are we going to awake as a Church? Have we asked God for a message? Has He told us that it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed? Or are we going to drone on with the same mumbling and outworn phrases and true and veritable commonplaces of our ignorance?—for that is the true word by which to describe our limited intelligence. We might have such messages. O preaching man, out on your holiday, coming to spend a morning with us in the City of London, you might go back over the Atlantic and begin again, as if you had never begun before, so that the people shall say, "With whom has our minister been closeted? on whose face has he been looking? Where did he get that poignant tone in the voice? He means it, and if he means it, we must mean it." It is so that God works. O Thou Godhead, Three in One, and One in Three, the contradiction of all number, and the reconciliation of all mystery, baptise us as with the Holy Ghost!

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the triune God, abide with us, and in our hearts let there be no pain, no night, no death. Amen.

Order of Service, 21st July, 1901.

Voluntary ... ... "Andante" ... ... *Calkin*

Anthem 5 ... "They that wait upon the Lord" ... ... *Elvey*

The Lord's Prayer.—*Hawkins.*

Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn 514 ... "The dawn of God's dear Sabbath."

1st Lesson. Isaiah xii.

Chant 104 ... ... Psalm cxxxviii. ... ... *Higgins*

2nd Lesson. John iv. 6-10.

Anthem ... ... "Be merciful unto me" ... ... *Sydenham*

Be merciful unto me, O God, for man goeth about to devour me: he is daily fighting and troubling me; mine enemies are daily in hand to swallow me up; for they be many that fight against me, O Thou Most Highest. Nevertheless, though I am sometime afraid, yet put I my trust in Thee. Yea, in God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me. Hallelujah. Amen.—Psalm lvi. 1, 2, 3, 11.

Solo: Mr. Edgar Archer.

Prayer.

Hymn 322 ... "Jesus calls us o'er the tumult."

Sermon.

Offertory and Organ Voluntary.

Hymn 312 ... ... "I need Thee every hour."

Benediction and Threefold Amen.—*Gounod.*

Voluntary ... ... "Postlude" ... ... *Fletcher*

PASTORAL WORDS.

HOW prone we are to blame the preacher for our weariness, and to credit the service with our indifference! How often shall we repeat the doctrine that a good hearer makes a good preacher! and how often shall we reiterate the view that the hearer is as much bound to be prepared as is the preacher! Is all the preparation to be in the pulpit? Is the minister always to be a radiant angel, eloquent with praise and prayer? and is the hearer to be but an indifferent listener?

When the hearer hastens to the church, saying, I will see my God to-day, I will meet my Lord this morning; may the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, inspire the teacher that he may see far and clearly, and speak wisely and well—that hearer will never be disappointed.

We are always in danger of weariness through what we call the monotony of life. There is not sufficient distinction between the days. We easily fall into circumstances in which we forget the succession of days. A man who is on the sea day after day has sometimes to inquire what day it is, what date it is; the days are blurred into one another, and the man cannot distinguish in the confusion. So it is with life in some of its broadest aspects. One day is so like another; the same bell rings, the same meal is spread, the same duty calls, and by-and-bye we become weary of it all.

What a trial to every mind this constant repetition of religious service must be! It is a heavy trial to the conductor of such services. How much we expect of the poor man who leads our worship and directs our studies: what little pity we have for him! Every Sabbath he must perform a miracle of resurrection upon our dead piety; we have been in the world six days, buying, selling, getting gain, or making losses, we have forgotten the whole conception of God, and we expect some brother man to come and revive us and recreate us and make us fit instruments to be played upon, and having re-tuned the instrument he must discourse the very music of heaven upon us, or we complain of inferiority, inability, monotony.

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we thank Thee for the peace of Thine own house. Here is the altar of mercy; here is the light, the lamp of hope; here, too, is Thy most holy Word, full of revelation, and Gospel, and testimony, and all that is noblest in life. May we hear Thy Word, and obey it in the power and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose sweet name we ever pray. We thank Thee for a resting-place, we bless Thee that we have here in Thine own house, within sight of the Cross, a deep sense of spiritual tranquility and rest; we will not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; God is our refuge and strength. We thank Thee for every hope that keeps our life alive; we bless Thee for every vision that makes our heart glad with new and brighter expectation. We pray Thee humbly at the Cross to be with us this morning; make it to us a morning special, to our heart's strength; may we remember it, not because of Thy great thunder only, but because of the whisper of peace in the heart; let the still small voice of Thy love find our attention and enchain it with the delights of Thy Gospel. We trust in Thy mercy, we have no other hope but the Cross of Christ; it is enough, it is more than enough, it is the almightiness of the grace and love of God. We pray Thee to hear us, and to make us quiet, and calm, and joyful, because it is none other than the house of God. Amen.

CLVIII.

MIXED MOTIVES.

"*Not for Jesus' sake only.*"—JOHN xii. 9.

HESE words may be read with marked and suggestive differences of emphasis. "Not for *Jesus'* sake only" would seem to be the natural emphasis; "Not for Jesus' sake *only*" would seem to convey another suggestion and meaning. I will take the text in both senses and in some other collateral senses.

Take the words thus: "Not for *Jesus'* sake only," though that might be the principal reason, but also for another reason, namely, that they might see the man whom Jesus Christ had raised from the dead. They did not want to exclude Jesus, but they wanted to see some one else. So they went for a double motive. How difficult it is in life to come squarely down on one simple direct motive or purpose! The subject, therefore, may well be Mixed Motives,—coming not for one reason, but for another reason, and for a third reason that may not take upon itself the form of words,—that other reason that always lies back of everything, that will not come to the front, that influences the whole intellectual and spiritual movement, and is yet an unconfessed or unavowed reason. Then what wonder that we should be the subjects of mixed motives in relation to the Christian religion when we act under mixed motives in our own household economy, in the whole circle of friendship, in the whole position and activity of commercial life, in political life, and in all the spheres and aspects of human development. Who can say what his motive is? He can give a general indication of it, and, blessed be God! there is always a supreme motive, and sometimes that supreme motive is good, and it

affords some kind of protection and colour and direction to all the meaner motives. All depends upon the supreme purpose or design. God never takes us at our lowest point; He would credit us with everything that is excellent; for the higher excellencies of our character He is looking out, and these He will magnify with all the wondrous wealth of His own love. He takes our prayers at their best, not at their worst; He heals the moment the faith comes, the moment that He can detect the faith He performs the miracle of healing; He does not mind a trembling, He can understand and forgive it. One man said to Him, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." There was a kind of double motive or a double tendency, the one urging the man upward and onward and Godward, and the other keeping him down, binding him to the earth, and insisting that he has yielded to temptation and to all the lower motives of life. But Jesus took Him at the point of real faith; He saw what the man would be and would do if he could. It is thus that the divine Interpreter reads us, else what would become of us, and what would become of our hopes and desires, and what would become of our best endeavours, if God Himself did not complete them with the purity and the beauty and the strength of His own grace? It is thus God ever takes us. Jesus Christ did not cease to bless these people because they came with a double motive. He knew that some of them had come to see Lazarus; that was an inferior motive, but not a bad motive. He did not say, "Because you have not come for the very highest purpose that man can come to Me, I will not answer you, I have no communication from heaven to make to you." He knows our frame, He remembers that we are dust, and a sigh is a conquering prayer, a groan may complete the prevalence of our strength. It is thus that God judges us and helps us.

Now let us apply this test to everything in life, and we shall find how merciful God is in taking us at our best. For example, in making a Christian profession we do not always make it "for Jesus' sake only." There are many reasons why some men attach themselves to the Church. A man may be in the Church

and out of it at the same time; the soul may be far away from the very altar at which the knees are bent. We may come from motives which would not bear interpretation and expression; God knows it, but if He sees ever so little a spark in the right direction, He seizes upon that, fans it into brightening glory, and accepts it as if there had been no degradation of thought, no lowliness and baseness of mind. God is love. Who could stand if we had only one motive to be judged by? and if there were no indications of the flesh, the world, and the devil, who then could abide the day of His coming? who could challenge His lightnings, and be calm amid the tumult of the tempest of His thunders? None; but it pleases God to read us as we are, each man himself, so to say, a mixed motive. He does not do anything with a straight, direct, and heavenly intent; there is a little selfishness in his very supplications, there is a reasoned or calculated morality in his public worship; he may find it in some degree convenient to make a profession of religion, it may help him through a hundred difficulties, it may save the putting of a hundred questions, it may give him a new and definite start in a fresh career. I ask again, and I ask myself most piercingly and killingly of all, Who could stand if we could only come to Christ's Cross and to Christ's house and the whole heavenly profession with one motive only, the purest motive that can regulate and animate human conduct? So then, we are here to-day, as on every other day, under the influence of divers feelings, mixed feelings, and God knows where the manhood is weakest and where it is strongest. Throw yourselves into the hands of God, and even your imperfect prayers and professions may be completed according to the scale of God's benevolence.

So it is in the matter of general Christian service. Who dare analyse his motives for preaching? Who dare analyse his motives for opening the doors, lighting the lamps, and helping in the general economy of the Church? None. We are in this respect as in others, wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. We dare not analyse our own motives; we sometimes, so to speak, slur them over, encouraging, it may be, the best of them, but still being profoundly

conscious of the worst of them. Ah me, it is awful; it is to me the greatest of all calamities to think that a man cannot get into a Christian pulpit without a damaged motive influencing him; and that motive is most subtle, and it makes my heart ache. Would I be here but for what I can get by it? It is an awful question, it must be faced. Would I be here if I sustained loss by it? How that question pierces me like a sword, and destroys in many an instance my ability to preach. Why did I say this or that? Because I should be applauded by the men who take the leading interest in my Church affairs. Oh, shame; murder of the heart! Why did I speak so emphatically and strongly on this or that other subject? Because I knew that I was speaking the mind of the congregation, and they would follow what I said with cheers and great and resounding applause, and I did not altogether want to say it. But who could stand if we thus set up the day of judgment in our own heart? Here we have to fall back on the original thought with which we started, that we must leave our motives—pure, impure, mixed, struggling, whatsoever they may be—to be judged by the living, loving God Himself. My dear brother, engaged in any department of Christian service, preaching, or music, or visiting, or writing books, or doing anything whatsoever, take heart of grace in this thought, that God knows all about it. It is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men. When you hear the voices of hostile criticism do not be too much cast down by it; there is another voice—God grant that we may hear it!—saying, Well done so far, try again, you have not yet attained, but keep on pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ; though you are faint, yet be pursuing, and though there may steal in upon your most spiritual moments some secular anxieties and degradations, leave all to God, and He will be just, gracious, and tender exceedingly.

There was one man whose case always cheers me; it is my one hope of heaven so far as human considerations are concerned. I am glad the conversation to which I refer took place; it has saved me from despair, it has kept me going in this poor

shattered ministry. The Lord said to him, "Lovest thou Me more than these?" Not "Lovest thou Me?" as an abstract and metaphysical inquiry, but an inquiry that acquires concreteness and shapeliness by the very person who institutes it. "Lovest thou Me more than these?"—more than these love thee, more than these tempt thee and seduce thee with their social attractions? Lovest thou Me? Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, "Lovest thou Me?" And he answered and said, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that this man, I, the man who but a night or two ago cursed and swore and denied Thee, and turned his back upon Thee, and ran away like a frightened coward—Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that right away down in my soul's soul I love Thee." We know what that experience is. Men would judge us at our very worst and very feeblest, but God puts the question to us until we answer Him in sober and burning earnestness, "Thou knowest that though the conduct has been very bad, though the action has been treasonable, though I have done everything to deserve the hell which has never yet been properly described, yet Thou knowest that away through all the murder and the filth, and the treason and the meanness, there is something in me that Thou didst plant, the root of the matter is even in Simon Peter." Blessed be God that we can in some degree say the same thing. God will at that point receive us with great love and tenderness.

Why do we come to the Church? Is it to see Jesus only? Who cares to come to see Jesus? Do I? Do you? Take any great crowd in the Church, and how many of the crowd have come to see Jesus? I dare not urge the question. Would you have come but for the presence of some Lazarus? Is there not a merely and perhaps basely human motive in your coming? There was a church much nearer your house than the church you are now in, and there was one there who knew Jesus and loved Him and spake simply and lovingly of Him, but you turned away from him because of his manner, his voice, his feebleness, his want of intellectual capacity, his want of up-to-dateness. It was not Jesus you

went for, but Lazarus, some man on whom is set the sign of peculiarity, individuality, who was raised from the dead, who was set up as a great embodiment of some grace or gift, some excellence or courage; and did we not go, you and I, not for Jesus' sake only, to the Christian service, but because that one particular man with his one particular manner was going to be there, and did we not—remember it!—turn away at the threshold of the church because that special peculiar man was not there? We did not go for Jesus' sake only, but that we might see Lazarus, a portentous man, a marvellous case, a special individuality. How humbling, how overwhelming, yet God knows how human. He is not going to be angry with us because we went for Lazarus rather than for Jesus in the first instance, because He knows that sometimes even through Lazarus a man has been brought to Jesus. It was so in the context. The Jews were exceedingly desirous to put Lazarus to death because he was a silent evangelist, he was drawing men by his personality into the grace and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. So we may find that an inferior motive may really have the final and abiding effect of a superior motive. We must not be too hard with ourselves and with others in running about after this man and that man, instead of going for Jesus' sake only. God has a wonderful way of making the wrath of man to praise Him, and He has a still more wonderful way of gratifying us with a larger utterance or vision or blessing than we at first contemplated. The woman went for the water, and found Jesus; the people went to see Lazarus, and they saw the Christ. So do not let us interfere with the working of our own best nature. Zaccheus went to see Jesus,—the poorest of all things to do, to see a spectacle, but through the spectacle he saw the vision, through the vision he saw the Man, through the Man he saw the Cross, and to-day he is spoken of as a son of Abraham.

The people went "Not for Jesus' sake only." Observe that "only"; there is a saving point even in that solitary word. They went to see Jesus and to see Lazarus also; we might read the text thus, and escape the whole idea of mixed motive as in any

sense weakening or degrading spiritual life; but the text is not read in that easy way, it has in it a hesitation, a point of doubt, a curious and inexplicable uncertainty as to the motive, so that if you had detained some of these people and said to them, "Now, answer distinctly and directly, for what purposes have you come?—from a single and unmixed motive?" no man could tell. The question ought not, indeed, to be put by man; there are some questions that should be spoken only by the lips of God. It is God that searches the heart, it is God that knows the weight of the prayer, it is God that knows how many tears there are in the psalm, how many sighings and groanings in the poor sobbing prayer; it is therefore not for man, whatever his dignity, his name, his profession, or his function, to ask certain great penetrating spiritual questions. We answer to God; that we are in the house of God itself is a good sign, to be anywhere near the temple of God is a hopeful indication of anxious religious progressive life. Why did you open the Bible? You cannot give a simple crystal reason that has in it no speck or flaw, but the very fact that you did open the Bible is itself a hopeful sign. Why go to that book where all is about God and truth and life, and duty and responsibility, and sin and redemption and immortality? Perhaps you did not go to it very lovingly, you went to it under some measure of constraint: do not vex yourself with such a question as that, you did go to the Book, the book-form of the Jesus, the Bible-form of the Cross, and mayhap in the opening of its pages, though you had no intent of it, you may have come upon the very Christ who is the jewel of the Book, the Sun of that grey sky.

You see therefore that I want to drive a man away from not receiving the blessing on the ground that he accuses himself of bad motives or mixed motives or unworthy motives; I know all about that. You may perhaps think that you have committed the unpardonable sin, but I know you have not. "How do you know that I have not?" Because you are in the house of God, and being in that house it means that you want to get further in and see more light and hear an ineffable music. It does, and the devil is

tempting you at this moment to think that it does not, but the devil is a liar, and he was a murderer from the beginning, and he wants to kill your soul. Do not say, "I am here to see Lazarus, I am here to see some miracle, I am here because I was driven in by the threatening, muttering thunder"—do not say so; that is a temptation: you are here as a simple matter of fact, and you see here in this place an open book, and that open book makes the occasion, is the occasion; a shut Bible would be a shut hope, an open Bible in your mother tongue creates a great occasion of mercy. I beg you therefore not to take the low motive and pester yourself with a most vexatious reproach, that you cannot be right because you did not go from the very best motive of all. Temptation comes subtly, temptation may come in at that point; the devil may now be squatting on your shoulder and whispering through your ear to the attention of your soul saying, "You have no right to be here, you know you did not want to come, you are perfectly well aware you come from a false motive; you have an unworthy design, you want to get rid of something or to acquire something; your place is outside." Resist the devil, and he will flee from you, and take the great tender solace, the most comforting encouragement, that being here in God's house you, even you, may receive a blessing, and go away enriched, uplifted, assured that you have not yet seen all the firmament of God's immeasurable goodness.

Of course some one will afflict himself with the notion that he came into the house of God or accepted the profession of religion or set himself in a certain relation to goodness because he was afraid. Many persons think they are made religious through their fear; I am not going to discourage the operation of that sentiment; even fear is part of the great providential ministry; fleeing from the wrath to come, a man may flee to the city of refuge called Calvary. I know it may be described as a poor thing, a base thing, that a man should pray because he is afraid that the neglect of prayer will bring some judgment upon him. Do not yield to that temptation; fear is not the noblest motive, servile fear may be the

very poorest quality of motive, but there is a reverential fear, there is a filial fear. But I am not willing to drive out the operation even of servile fear; I want by all means to save some; if they crawl in through the door of fear they are still welcome; I should love to have seen them flying on the wings of hope and triumphant gratitude, but to get you into the ark of God is the one thing I am aiming at in this ministry, which for the moment I am now concluding. If therefore you are here only because of fear, if the lightning has frightened you, if the innocent thunder has made you afraid, and has brought you into the sanctuary of God, who knows but that it may be the making of you, who knows but that now you may accept the Christ, seeing, not the inferior but the superior, not the human but the divine, not the Lazarus but the Christ?—though you were never here before and were driven in because there was a thunder-shower in the clouds and you thought it might overwhelm you, and you, in some as it were cowardly manner, found this corner where you could be for the time safe from the storm. I am not going into that matter of motive; I will not upbraid you, I am not going to lacerate or sting you by some foolish reproach or wise reproach; I am going to say, My friend, you are here, thank God for it; you can even now retire from the sanctuary saying, "I have seen Jesus, and He has made me glad."

Thus you see I begin with Jesus, I end with Jesus. Thirty-two years ago I began in this ministry with Jesus and the resurrection; I have no other theme, it is the same old, old story, but the old stories, being true and good, being faithful to human nature and to the imagination and to reason, always come up again even in what we call literary fiction. There is a time when we say, "Read me the book of my youth; there was a book that used to enthrall and fascinate me exceedingly, and there was something in it that is not in the stuff that is produced to-day; they were real downright good stories when I was twenty-five; now I am seventy-five, and I would like to hear some of the old fiction; I remember the juice of it, I remember the purpose of it, I remember that there

was something in it to think about; reach down that old story and read it to me that I may compare it with the memories of my youth." You know that that is a fact in the literary education you have undergone; very well, apply it to this highest of the schools, and there will come a time when the only Book you will want will be the Bible; it will be the only book you cannot do without, it will be the only Book that really speaks to you, it will be the Book that finds you, that knows the way of your heart, the secret of your misery, and the depth of your wound. Then the Bible is the only book that knows all your family history, all those little graves, some three feet long, that you dug far-away back in the vanished past, and the larger grave: this Book will show you where each is, and will interpret the meaning of each, and will say over each, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die; yea, though he were dead, yet shall he live." This Raiser of Lazarus will be the Raiser of every man who falls asleep in Him. Oh, to sleep on the heart of Jesus is to have heaven even before we get there.

I think you will bear me witness that we have to-day met under the most trying circumstances which concern either a preacher or a hearer. I shall never forget this thunder. I beg you not to be afraid of it; there is nothing to fear; at evening-time there will be light. I am glad of the thunder, though humanly speaking I wish it had come yesterday. I am just looking over these poor little notes, for I could not see one of them, and how the reporter has got along he will be able to tell us in some far-away reminiscence. I am just wondering whether I have not left enough to preach another sermon from, and I think I have. We part to day, so far as our Thursday services are concerned, and will, God being with us, resume after the last Sunday in September. We all need rest, poor limited weak men and women; we need frequent rest. Let us rest religiously, and then we shall resume our service with new inspiration and with deepening confidence in God.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the triune God, be with us till we meet again. Amen.

WORDS FOR PREACHERS.

"The plainest words are the most profitable oratory in the weightiest matters. Fineness is for ornament, and delicacy for delight; but they answer not necessity, though sometimes they may modestly attend that which answers it. Yea, when they are conjunct, it is hard for the necessitous hearer or reader to observe the matter of ornament and delicacy, and not to be carried from the matter of necessity; and to hear or read a neat, concise, sententious discourse, and not to be hurt by it; for it usually hindereth the due operation of the matter, and keeps it from the heart, and stops it in the fancy, and makes it seem as light as the style. We use not to stand upon compliment or precedency, when we run to quench a common fire, nor to call men out to it by an eloquent speech. If we see a man fall into fire or water, we stand not upon mannerliness in plucking him out, but lay hands on him as we can without delay. I shall never forget the relish of my soul, when God first warmed my heart with these matters, and when I was newly entered into a seriousnes in religion; when I read such a book as Bishop Andrews' Sermons, or heard such kind of preaching, I felt no life in it; methought they did but play with holy things. Yea, when I read such as Bishop Hall, or Henshaw's Meditations, or other such essays, resolves, and witty things, I tasted little sweetness in them; though now I can find much. But it was the plain and pressing down-right preacher, that only seemed to me to be in good sadness, and to make somewhat of it, and to speak with life, and light, and weight: and it was such kind of writings, that were wonderfully pleasant and savoury to my soul. And I am apt to think that it is thus now with my hearers; and that I should measure them by what I was and not by what I am. And yet I must confess that though I can better digest exactness and brevity, than I could so long ago, yet I as much value seriousness and plainness; and I feel in myself in reading or hearing, a despising of that wittiness as proud foolery, which savoureth of levity, and tendeth to evaporate weighty truths, and keep them from the heart. As a stage-player or morris-dancer differs from a soldier or a king, so do these preachers from the true and faithful ministers of Christ; and as they deal liker to players than to preachers in the pulpit, so usually their hearers do rather come to play with a sermon, than to attend a message from the God of Heaven about the life or death of their souls."—*Baxter*, 1615-1691.

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we come to Thee in the name of Jesus Christ. May we be in the spirit on the Lord's day; may there be no lack of harmony between the day and the soul. It is a day of sunshine and quietness, a great peace broods over this little section of time; it is the rest day: may the soul be at rest in this deep great calm; may there be no tumult in the soul; Jesus, speak to the billows and to the noisy waves, and bid them be still that we may know whose day it is, and what is the value of the jewel. We long for rest; we desire to sit beside some historic well; being weary with our journey, we would sit amid the calms, the benedictions, and the ever-brightening hopes of some place fixed by Thyself as the meeting-place of our souls and God We thank Thee for the public garden, for the great broad wayside on which every man journeying heavenward may sit, and hear birds and gospels, and scent sweet flowers, and feel that the universe when little has only been degraded by our own base imagining. May we know that every place is the house of God and the gate of heaven; may we see ladders that scale the skies and behold the angels descending and ascending, and coming and returning, and shining and singing, and amid all the wondrous manifestation may we see Jesus, the Child, the Babe, the Man, the Saviour; and thus may the day be made memorable to us with a great quietness and in it a great music. Surely the Lord hath done great things for us; we have endeavoured to name them one by one, and have utterly failed. Who can count the stars or number the sands upon the seashore? When that is done, we may begin to think we can number the mercies of God, the tears that wet the earth as they fall from the Divine eyes. Oh that we might know how pitiful Thou art, how tender, how compassionate, how infinite in condescension! We will think of the past, and it shall be to us the light of the future; Thou hast never forsaken us, but for a small moment, that the everlasting might seem still more everlasting. This is Thy way, a way in the great deep, a way of darkness, a way of pain; still it is Thy way, and out of it all Thou dost bring order and perfectness. It is ours to trust, it is Thine to work out; the hardness of trust Thou knowest; it is a miracle in itself Thou dost permit us to work such mighty signs and wonders, but it is all through Thy Spirit, Thy grace, Thy tender, daily, ceaseless ministry. May we remember this, lest we look at our weakness and not at Thy strength. What

art Thou going to do with us? is a question we may not ask, nor may we say, Lord, what shall this man do? We hear the rebuking voice saying, What is that to thee? follow thou Me. We hear the command, may we have enabling grace that we may meet it in sweet, in uncomplaining obedience. Lord, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him? The heavens tremble at Thy presence, and all things await Thy smile and Thy command. We join the great number, we take our stand at the Cross, we feel the passion and the pathos of that tree. May we be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Lord, increase our faith. The Lord bless us, our wives, our children, our little ones, our cattle, and all belonging to us, that we may know that nothing is excluded from the blessing of Thy providence. Help the young and the old, the suffering, and those who are in sore distress; regard tenderly those between whom and some great love or benediction there is but a thin veil, and yet when it is touched it is harder than granite. Thou dost thus try man and prove him sorely, but Thy grace is sufficient for him. The Lord help us to believe this, then the hymn will never cease in our house, and the great blessing will never be withdrawn from the resting-place which we know as our home. Amen.

CLIX.

FULLY AWAKE.

"*When they were fully awake they saw His glory.*"—LUKE ix. 32 (R.V.)

HUS it must ever be. Most men are half asleep, and they do not know it. So they see nothing, and go home to tell nothing, and say, worst of all, that there was nothing to be seen. It is always so, and yet men complain that they have but little success in life. They have all the success they deserve. It would be surprising if some men had success. They are half-asleep; to put it more charitably, they are only half-awake, and they wonder when they hear what other people have seen. They do not believe it; they say that the other people have spoken in a tone of rhetorical exaggeration.

Christianity is a fully-awake religion. It is no blurred dream, it is no shifting nightmare; it is a stand-up and fully-awake religion. That is the reason that so few people are religious. They think that the Christian Gospel is something to be thought about when they are living in luxury, when they are resting their idle heads upon a couch they never worked for. That explains everything. Take it into commerce, take it into literature, take it into preaching, take it into the whole range and area of life; it is the wakeful man that sees things, and sees many of them, and watches them burn into glory. Things must appear to be unfair to those who are not fully awake. We speak of some men in business as being wide awake; it may be a great compliment, it may be a poor one; still, wakefulness may be the key of success. Watch everything. In order that we may watch there is a preliminary rule, and Jesus Christ laid it down; He said, "Be sober." The blurred eyes of a drunkard can see nothing. Be sober, be vigilant. You cannot alter this arrangement; this is the rhetoric of God. If we are not sober we shall make but poor watchmen, and the city gates will be violated by any enemy that cares to assail them.

"When they were fully awake they saw His glory." The Christian religion is a challenge to the highest powers of the mind. The Christian religion waits until a man is fully awake, and then says, What of this, this vision, this revelation, this solution of what you call the social problem? O ye makers of toy words, indiarubber or alabaster words, with your social problems! The Gospel attacks man at his highest power, wakens him, stirs him up, says, "Awake, thou that sleepest!" Christianity only addresses attentive people. The poor preacher has to address persons who say they are overcome by the heat. Some people are soon overcome; there is nothing in them to overcome; they have allowed themselves to sink into this want of pith and loss even of natural energy. All through the great revelation there has been a cry, saying, Awake! Because people have not answered that cry they have seen really nothing in the Gospel; they do not know what it means. A deaf man can

have but a very confused notion of music. I wonder what his notion is. Many persons have divested themselves of their highest faculties; when they come into the sanctuary they do not bring even their ordinary intelligence with them. They think they are going to listen to some little Sunday-school drivel, and that anybody could do the same thing; but they are greatly and vitally mistaken. Even Sunday-school teaching is not to be sneered at, especially by those who cannot teach in the Sunday-school. The cry to-day is, "It is high time to awake out of sleep." Why, even the old pagans had some notion of a man getting out of bed and stirring himself until his whole energy could be brought to bear upon his prayers; hence they said, "In sailing to Tarshish awake yourself and call upon thy god."

It is because we are not awake that we see so little. Christianity has great messages to the intellect; the Christian Gospel is a wonderful and most pathetic appeal to the highest imagination of the soul. How many in this audience are awake? Attention wins; attention reaps the harvest; attention sees the stars as they come trooping over the clouds and peeping and twinkling through the mists. This is a great congregation, but probably there are not more than a dozen people here who are really awake and who want to hear nothing but the Gospel. Blessed are they who have ears to hear; yea, said the Lord, blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled, they shall be satisfied until they shout and sing with grateful delight. I have often said that the most of professing Christians are invalids, and they have only accepted Christianity because it is a kind of food for infants, food for invalids. But the Gospel will not receive any half-awake assent. Arrest your souls at that point, and think but for one flashing moment. This Gospel does not come and ask me to receive it when I am half-awake, when I see men as trees walking, when the film has not been cleared out of mine eyes; it does not say, Now this little riddle you can keep until the late afternoon, and then when you feel some lulling influence

closing your eyelids you can say, What do you think about it? The Gospel will not have that homage; it is not homage, it is not loyalty, it is not justice. The Gospel says, At midday you will see the light, a light that shall put out the sun. When you are at your best, your strongest, when your mind is quickened and spurred into its most terrible energy, then what think ye of Christ? Do not reserve Christ as a problem to be thought about when you are well over seventy, and when there seems to be nothing in the papers worthy of particular attention; do not wait until the poor brain feels a kind of cloudiness coming upon it, and then send for some preacher of the Word to explain to you what it is all about. No; you should have done that thirty-five years ago, fifty years ago, more still, in the very morning of life, when the dew was upon the soul; then, when you were fully awake, you could have considered about the greatest question beyond all comparison that can challenge the attention of man. Of course we may be fully awake to the defects of other people, to the deficiency even of the sermon itself; along that line we may be very fully awake, so fully awake as to cause extremes to meet and thus the intellect to fall into a kind of comatose condition. The question is this: The Gospel is an appeal to thought—what do you think about it? Thought can only be exercised when the mind is at its best. What has your answer been to the Gospel of Christ in all its tender, wondrous appeals?

As the Gospel will have no half-awake assent, so the Gospel will have no half-awake service. It will not accept it; it repudiates it. Of course the most of people live under the delusion that business must be first attended to. Christ never said so; I have been with Him now some fifty odd years, and He never said to me, The first thing you have to do in the morning is to arrange all about the business of the day, lay it out, and then if you happen to have half an hour in the afternoon, come and meet Me in the sanctuary. Never! He is an austere Master, austere even when the tears are welling in His eyes. He says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." "But, Lord, my business

must be attended to down in the City." He said, Why? He takes all these things so calmly; He always took this whole creation, so far as we can see it, as a thing that was to be burned. You say, "We must live." Christ says, Why? who wants you to live? what necessity is there for you to live? at what cost are you going to live? and is it living if the cost exceed a certain value? is it not really suicide, self-slaughter? Think! Many people attend to Christian service when the day's work is done; they look in to see how some little question is going on, and they think that is serving Christ. So it is in a certain sense and in a certain very limited degree. The man will come in, he says, after office hours, and the principal himself says he will look in perhaps some time in the evening. He comes in, weary with making money; he says, "I am really tired of that poor drudgery, I forget just now whether it was fifteen thousand or five and twenty thousand pounds, my head is really getting so muddled about these things; I know it has been quite a field day in my business—but, Mr. Chairman, what is the business before us?" Poor worn-out creature, poor crushed back-boneless drudge; he comes in with eyes marked all over with vacancy and stupefaction, and asks what the business is: whereas he should have taken it at eight o'clock in the morning when he was fresh, awake, young. But that, you say, would never do. Have you ever tried it? They say the Sermon on the Mount will never do: have you put it to the test? Man, who made thee a ruler and a judge and a distributor of services and functions, saying, This must come first, and that must come midst, and the other must come last? Produce your authority, seal your wisdom with the name of Christ if you can.

"When they were fully awake." The word "fully" is in the Revised Version. We have in the Authorised Version "awake," in the Revised Version we have the "fully," bringing up the condition to the very highest efficiency. "When they were fully awake," and there was no mistake about the environment, "they saw His glory," and they saw a great perspective of law and prophecy, going back to

the morning when the fountains of waters were opened, and the Lord set a bound to all habitable things. We have not seen this; in fact, we say, Now do you think on the whole that all these things in the Bible are really true? Not to you who ask the question in that dreary tone; there is nothing true to you; you are not true to yourself; you are shut out, and your place is in outer darkness. And yet my dear young friends, my young men and temporary disciples, come to me and say that somebody has asked them if they think this miracle really did occur. Not to them; no miracle ever occurred to them. Why not? Because they are half asleep; when they are fully awake they will have no difficulty about miracles. It is when the Lord is seen by eyes that are purged to see Him that the soul enters into full Sabbath-tide and into the whole festival of the Divine love. Of course you do not suppose that a man who has a severe attack of cataract can see things, and you will not be surprised if the poor half-blind creature comes to you and says, Do you really think that was a sunrise or a sunset? I can hardly decide which. Is that a man coming, or is it a tree walking? is this a mob, or a mirage? or what is it? This poor afflicted creature is not to be appointed judge of the case; the man is half-blind: why do you go to him on questions of vision, of proportion, and of meaning?

When we are fully awake we shall see the glory of the Bible. Get wakened in your souls, come out of the dormitory, catch the early rain, and let it freshen you into quickness of mind, and then take the holy Book, and it will be to you a Book of revelation and vision and promise. I have tried this; by the grace of God, this is the only thing I have really tried. I speak, therefore, what I have seen, felt, handled, and known of this Book of God. If you come to it with the last dictionary or commentary, I shall not wonder at your being in a rather confused mental condition. I do not want you to come even through a minister, certainly not through a priest, to the Book of God. Man, take it yourself, when your mind is at its best, and sit down, it may be in the shadow of some flowery hedge, or by some well called by holy name, and there say what the

Book is to your sorrow, your weakness, your blindness, your sense of loss, your conviction of sin. Poor Bible, Book of God, thou hast been most unjustly and unfairly and wickedly treated. Of course nothing ever occurs, let me repeat, to the half-awake man; a miracle must be a great wonder to him in the sense of being a wonder of confusion; it challenges what he calls his reason,—as if that man could have any reason who is rubbing his eyes to see whether the sky is still where he left it last night. What we want in the Church, and we challenge it, and we call for it, is the brightest intellects in their brightest moments; then let the Bible be judged, and I am willing to accept the award.

When we are fully awake we see the glory of Providence. Providence all lies about us in little pieces, and the Lord says, Now put these all together, and shape them into a temple; it can be done, I will help you to do it. All these detached pieces of life excite my impatience and my distrust; things look so unrelated and confused and incoherent, and this happened at such an hour, and that happened at such another hour, and I thought they both would have happened differently, and now that they have happened they have only added to my mental confusion. Get fully awake; let the soul rub its eyes, and be anointed with the salve of heaven, and then little by little, as coming through a mist, we shall see the divine shaping of things, and say, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven; how little I suspected this, how little I imagined that these things could by any possibility occur! I remember ten years ago a blinding calamity fell upon me, and I almost cursed the holy name, thinking that by blasphemy I might work my way to rest, but I was saved from blasphemy, and only yesternight the other and completing thing occurred; now I see the meaning of the first; now they clasp one another as by a kind of masonry, and are mutually explanatory, and now I say, Praise God for the very calamity that smote me to the earth and trampled me under foot for the time being." Many men could say this, many

poor hearts have found relief in saying it. God seems to keep us waiting ten years or fifteen years that we may see just how it was; that misery you had in your childhood—you were the man, I think, who began life by begging bread; you remember, it is now thirty, forty, fifty years ago. That was the making of you, that hunger was your university, that terrible experience was the school of God. You never would have been the man you are now in moral majesty, in spiritual sensitiveness, in great humaneness of soul, but for these wonderful things you endured full fifty years ago. You may say perhaps in reply, "But the completing providence has not yet occurred." It will occur; what you have to do is to hold on, cling to the living Word and the living God, and wait. Will you do it? Man, I want to save your soul by the Providence of God and the grace of Christ, and I ask you therefore, with this holy passion, to do it, to hold on, keep on, never let go. If you could accept that injunction you would leave the house of God a happier man. Time is wanted to see the glory, fully-awakeness is necessary to see God. Are you fully awake? Can you say Yes, sincerely to your own soul? and have you ever gone to the Church of Christ, to the Book of God, to the Cross of redemption? "Fully awake"; then you have seen the glory, and all the trials you have had in the meantime are part of the jewellery. You see, when a metal is good through and through—not something bad at the heart of it, and something gilded or golden wreathed round the face of it; not that—but when it is through-and-through work, and hand-work, and patiently executed work, it takes a long time. You see, grace has no labour-saving machinery, you cannot come into this thing by a patent method. To some people what they call the plan of salvation may be a kind of geometrical figure—oh! there is no plan of salvation in any architectural or geometrical sense; there is a Logos, a thought, a reason, that requires eternity to work itself out into full figure and expression, but you cannot get a labour-saving machine for your soul. The preacher cannot save your soul, the priest cannot get near your soul, and all the books of men are but shadows and phases. The one thing, the only thing,

that can get at you and into you is the Spirit of the living God. Do not ask to be fully awake all at once; only remember that when you give judgments you must modify your judgment by the fact of your present condition of consciousness. The Lord once asked a man whose eyes He was attending to what he saw; he said, "I see men as trees walking," or he might have seen trees as men walking. Would you take his judgment on that point? You say, No, wait an hour, wait three or four hours; I like to face men at midday, let us meet then; and the Lord grants midday blessings to midday watchers, to midday wakefulness, to midday energy.

Then, remember, that this wakefulness is a duty. We have to stir ourselves. "Stir up the gift that is in thee," said the apostle to the younger man; stir it up. We have already quoted the holy word, "It is high time to awake; now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed." What, brethren, holy brethren and wakeful, what if here and now we cannot be really, in the deepest sense of the words, fully awake. That must be so. We cannot be alive all through and through—as the children would say, really and truly alive—down here, because there are so many shadows, oppositions, and challenges, and cross-currents, and mixed motives; we cannot here and now within the limitations of time and space be fully awake. There is so much to distract attention, to break it into two, to split it up into many, so that we can hardly give our whole soul to one continuous thought or prayer. The apostle Peter said, speaking of this very incident of the text, in which he himself was concerned, "We were eye-witnesses of His majesty." And what if we have to wait for our full view of Christ until we have passed through the valley? "When I am awake, my soul shall be satisfied when I behold Thy likeness; when I awake I am still with Thee." What if it should so be that we have to wait until they draw down the blinds, and make the streets soft with straw, that no horse's hoof may hurt our brain? What if the dearest voices have to be hushed into whispers, what if the life-pendulum has to cease, before we really cross into eternity, what if we have to overcome the last enemy and

pluck the victory from the grave, before we are fully awake? There is no sleep yonder, there is no uncertainty of sight in the clear morning of heaven; we see things as they are, we know even as we are known. Oh, so to sleep that we may awake in heaven!

We shall say good-bye to one another to-night, the evening service concluding our intercourse for this pulpit year. I have to thank God for a year of mercy so far as my work is concerned. Every friend has been faithful, every ally has done the very utmost to make my ministry useful. I thank all who have so faithfully and consistently worked by my side; not a frown has passed between us, not one unkind word has been exchanged. Surely this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. We shall say good-bye temporarily after thirty-two years' Christian fellowship. And sometimes I have been on the point of dejection, because I seemed to have roamed sickle in hand all over the biblical field. God has allowed me to come into this dejection that He might startle me out of it by some new vision and gift of light. I think, in all my thirty-two years of study and ministry amongst you, I never lighted upon a text that has given me greater joy and stimulus than the text we have just been considering. Perhaps we are not even yet fully awake. But whatever glory I see I will endeavour to communicate the intelligence of it to you, that your souls may rejoice with me that the river of God is full of water, and that we have hardly yet begun to realise our vast inheritance in Christ.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the triune God, abide with us until we are fully awake. Amen.

Order of Service, 28th July, 1901.

Voluntary ... ... "Andante" ... ... *Batiste*

Anthem 14 ... ... "As the hart panteth" ... ... *Mason*

The Lord's Prayer.—*Hawkins.*

Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation ; But deliver us from evil : For Thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn 2 ... ... "The God of Abraham praise."

1st Lesson. Proverbs i. 20-23.

Chant 112 ... ... Psalm cl. ... ... *Humphreys*

2nd Lesson. Matt. xi. 16-19.

Anthem ... ... "I will alway give thanks" ... *J. Clarke-Whitfeld*

I will alway give thanks unto the Lord. His praise shall be ever in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord ; the humble shall hear thereof and be glad. O praise the Lord with me, and let us magnify His name together.

Prayer.

Hymn 288 ... ... "Behold what wondrous grace."

Sermon.

Offertory and Cornet Solo :

"Tears" ... ... *Cowen*

Mr. George Harlow.

Hymn 196 ... ... "One there is above all others."

Benediction and Threefold Amen.—*Gounod.*

Voluntary ... ... "Festival March" ... ... *Watson*

PASTORAL WORDS.

HAVE we made our preparation for the chief of Guests? Has the housewife made no arrangement to receive her visitor with becoming care and distinction? Will any place do for one whose head is illuminated with divine light, whose heart is filled with the love of Calvary, whose presence is an indication of an ineffable and immortal kingliness? The king's daughter will receive the king in a prepared chamber; she will say, This habitation must be made worthy of him; he himself is glorious, and such glory as I can supply must be furnished against the time of his coming.

So, who would receive God into an unprepared heart? We must make the heart-house as worthy as we can of the King's coming. This we can do—we can pray God the Holy Ghost to make us what we ought to be, to take possession of our heart, to cleanse it, purify it, elevate its every impulse, and consecrate it as the guest-chamber in which God Himself shall abide with us. Consciousness of the Divine Presence implies conscious communion with God, taking ourselves up to our highest estate, sharing the very thought and passion of Divine love.

Mystery of mysteries is this, that the mortal can talk with the Eternal; that the creature can commune with the Creator; that a life so low that presently it will be cut down and burned like grass in the oven, can go right up to Eternal Kingliness and say, Let us commune together, concerning the mystery of being and the mystery of destiny: O Eternal King, let me, poor, poor me, talk with Thee a long time! Out of this must come a growing solicitude to be transformed into the divine likeness. When we can see God we can be satisfied with no other beauty; all other beauty then sinks into its right relation, and becomes but a dim type or emblem of the ineffable loveliness; having seen God, we can bear the sight of nothing lower, except that which is of kindred quality, and that which we can help to the level to which the Holy Spirit has exalted our own souls.

Given the conscious divine presence, conscious communion with God, and you have given, if not noontide, yet heavenly dawn; such consciousness shall grow like the advancing sun until it has reached the zenith of its power and splendour.

"The breath of a man has more force in a trunk, and the wind a louder and sweeter sound in the organ-pipe, than in the open air. So the matters of our speech and them of our discourse, which are conveyed through figures and forms of art, both sound sweeter to the ear and pierce deeper into the heart; there is in them more evidence and efficacy, they make a fuller expression and deeper impression than any plain, rough-hewn, long cart-rope speeches, or language whatsoever can do."—*Spencer*, 1658.

"Much ornament is no good sign: painting of the face argues an ill complexion of body, a worse mind. Truth hath a face both honest and comely, and looks best in her own colours. But, above all, Divine Truth is most fair; and most scorneth to borrow beauty of man's wit or tongue: she loveth to come forth in her native grace, like a princely matron; and counts it the greatest indignity to be dallied with like a wanton strumpet: she looks to command reverence; not pleasure: she would be kneeled to; not laughed at. To prank her up in vain dresses and fashions, or to sport with her in a light and youthful manner, is most abhorring from her nature: they know her not that give her such entertainment; and shall first know her angry, when they do know her. Again she would be plain; but not base, not sluttish: she would be clad, not garishly; yet not in rags: she likes as little to be set out by a base soil, as to seem credited with gay colours. It is no small wisdom to know her just guise; but more, to follow it: and so to keep the mean, that, while we please her, we discontent not the beholders."—*Hall*, 1574-1656.

"It is both an old and easy observation that, however the senses are alike strong and active on the right side and on the left, yet that the limbs on the right side are stronger than those on the left, because they are more exercised than the other; upon which self-same reason it must follow that a left-handed man hath more strength in his left arm than in his right.

"Neither is it otherwise in the soul. Our intellectual parts grow vigorous with employment, and languish with disuse. I have known excellent preachers and pregnant disputants that have lost these faculties with lack of action; and others, but meanly qualified by natural gifts, that have attained to a laudable measure of abilities by improvement of their little. I would rather lack good parts than that good parts should lack me. Not to have great gifts is no fault of mine: it is my fault not to use them."—*Hall*, 1574-1656.

[*Thursday Morning, 19th September,* 1901.]

CLX.

ANARCHY.

"*But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.*"—1 PETER iv. 15.

GOD save the King! God bless the President of the United States of America! William McKinley, President of the United States of America, was shot in the city of Buffalo by an avowed Anarchist on Friday, September 6th, 1901. President McKinley died in the same city on the morning of Saturday, September 14th. We meet to-day, September 19th, in the City Temple, to take part, not with our own nation only, but with the whole civilised world, in mourning the President's death, in sympathising with his broken-hearted widow, and in sharing the sorrow of the greatest nation created by modern history. It seems but a month or two ago, a year at most, since I stood here to do somewhat of the same service in connection with the assassination of President Garfield. It would seem as if one red stream of blood mingled with the other, and we were in very deed face to face with a double tragedy. This Thursday morning service has been held in the City of London for full thirty-two years. When I was asked on behalf of the National Council of Free Churches to specialise this morning's service, I at once gladly consented, and I now affectionately welcome all my honoured brethren, whose names will remain for ever upon the records of this church in connection with this never-to-be-forgotten, most melancholy occasion. I see that I am announced to deliver "An Address." That word is not welcome here. Standing here for thirty-two years on Thurs-

day morning, I deliver no addresses. By the grace of God I endeavour to preach the everlasting Gospel. You will find, therefore, what I think is an appropriate text in 1 Peter iv. 15: "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters."

What strikes me first of all is an apparently sudden drop in the quality of the men who are mentioned almost by name by the Apostle. One feels a kind of sense of anti-climax. A murderer, a thief, an evildoer, there the line is maintained at its high level; but when we come to a busybody, a tattler, a gossiper, do we not feel conscious that the level has been changed? How can we begin with a murderer, and end with a tattler? It is not so as the Apostle wrote it; "busybody" is the rendering of what has been termed by reverent commentators a droll word, a word singularly compounded and fabricated for the occasion. "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, an anarchist." You see now the propriety of the text. Let none of you suffer as a man who is hostile to society; have no communications with men who would upset society; have nothing to do with the spirit of anarchy, hostility, contempt, in relation to social order. Were the word literally rendered it would come to, Self-appointed, self-created bishops or overseers over other folks' affairs. But it goes deeper in its tragic meaning; it goes right down to red anarchy. So the text is, Let no man suffer as an anarchist, as one who is determined to derange and destroy society. Keep order, obey law, supply securities to society; do not threaten its life. Blessed be God, no man can kill society, but he can try to do it; he can act as if he would do it if he could. There are many anarchists. Let us pause over that declaration.

Too much cannot be said in praise of President McKinley's character and ability, nor can too much horror be expressed at the infernal deed which has deprived civilisation of one of its most conspicuous ornaments; nor can sympathy be too fully and tenderly expressed towards a lady who has in her whole conduct shown all that is bravest and loveliest

in Christian womanhood. I do not propose to dwell upon the merely personal aspects of this most painful tragedy. We must look out for and bring into effective prominence some of the great lessons—social, political, and religious—with which the mournful event is so heavily and so thrillingly charged. The question is, What is to be done with assassins, anarchists, dynamitards, and murderers of every political name and degree? After all, that is not the question. We are busy at the wrong point; we have not so much to do with the stamping out of some anarchist as with the eradication and final destruction of anarchy itself. And if judgment in this matter begin at the house of God, where shall the red-handed assassins and miscreants appear? The question is, How is the anarchic spirit to be encountered and destroyed? What is the answer of Christianity to the madness which threatens the very life of organised and disciplined society? Was it William McKinley that was shot? Yes, in one sense, in a limited and most unhappy sense, but in the murder of President McKinley it was *society* that was in purpose overthrown and destroyed. The lamented President was more than himself in his measurable personality; he represented law, order, security, and the whole line of civilisation. That is the true magnitude and the profound significance of this most villainous and deplorable murder. Do not degrade the event into a mere item of current news. This is more than an anecdote. Do not degrade it into an occasion for another public holiday. It is more than a cry to God for justice. It is a cry to every man, to every creature, to every family, to every church, to make such murder impossible. Beware lest we belittle the occasion and think of it as a news item, when a hand that represents thousands of other hands has been lifted and has dealt a blow to the very heart of society—as much a divine creation as the building of the stars. Do we make society? We have so little to do with it, but we think we do it all. No; He that built and distributed the stars built society, and He will not rest until He has turned it into His own Church.

I am perfectly clear that anarchy and all that

anarchy means is more widespread than even some statesmen suspect. You hear it in bye-places, you hear it in fragments of foreign language, you hear it in significant whispers; I hear it all over this central part of London; I know its hoarse voice, I know its infernal croak. It is a monster, and we bred it. That is my charge. It is not enough to ascribe anarchy to insanity, to a mad love of notoriety, or to abnormal and irrational discontent. You are trifling with the question. Anarchy is in every house of business, in every political club, probably in some form in every family. We only know it in its vulgarity; but anarchy is a spirit. All great things are spirits. God is a Spirit. Anarchy means, in its earlier stages, dislike of discipline, especially hatred of work, love of unearned and lazy bread, spiteful discontent with daily common service. Oh to escape drudgery, to get away from the desk and the bank and the pulpit! to get away from discipline and to call it enjoyment,— that is anarchy. You thought it was a man with an axe in his hand, and the blood dripping from its sharp blade; that is only one form of it; but that axe was made in the nursery. Find a society that does not like work, and you want no more quest after anarchy; you have it all there, you are on the cockatrice den. Anarchy is not in the beginning red-handed murder; in the beginning it is selfishness, indolence, laziness, false socialism. You see it at every street-corner, in the smoking loafers, the men who make others work for the bread they eat; that is anarchy — cowardly, mean, anonymous anarchy; but it is, in its last and truest spiritual analysis, the devil. That is where you must do some work. Society is not only political, it is a moral institution. Statesmanship did not make society, statesmanship may have spoiled it. Society is a spiritual or moral institution. The law is organised conscience; the policy of true society is justice in operation. This age is cursed by the spirit of irreverence. When you gave up praying you became an anarchist, and perhaps did not know it; when you rose from your knees, and said, "No more praying for me!" you became an assassin, but did not know it because it was not in some literal and frightsome vulgarity of form. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth

forth death"; irreverence, when it is finished, bringeth forth anarchy. Now the law is mocked, religion is neglected or abolished, Sunday is a day of recreation, religious worship is disregarded; yet with all these things we wonder that anarchy is spreading. We first dethrone God, and then wonder that the devil has taken up the vacant throne. It is in vain that we hang assassins, and certainly they deserve to be hung in burning chains, but we must go deeper if we are to destroy the spirit of anarchy. We must get back—O so old-fashioned I feel now and so out of the morning's date!—we must get back to the spirit of order, of reverence, of goodwill, and we can never get that spirit back but—O hear me, be ashamed of me if you will!—we can never get it back but through old Gospel ways, through the power of Christ, and the grace of His Cross. It is vain that we shudder at an assassination here and there, and then loosen the bonds of discipline. Discipline in all things is salvation. Social rectification must come through moral regeneration. When society is morally right it will soon be socially right. We shall never rectify society by killing murderers. Christians themselves must lead the grand campaign.

I am afraid I am going to say something which some of you will feel that you must in your own pulpits and churches modify to a large extent, but I must say it, or die; I am too old now to trifle with an occasion and work my way smoothly through it. I want to say that it is my distinct conviction —which I carry like a burden and feel like a fire, and that often would keep me out of the pulpit—it is my distinct conviction that the faithless Christian Church is largely to blame for social conditions which make anarchy possible. The Church—I am all but ashamed to name the creature—she has drunk her wine of sacrament, and gone out to gamble at the devil's counter. Oh, it is horrible! She has expelled by holding up her right hand some poor intellectual heretic, and gone to the bed of lust and the house of shame. Certainly you will instantaneously remind me of great exceptions; I know them. I make this sentence in full sight of the fact that there are honest Christians, honest churches. But the Church, taking her altogether,

is parting with too much. She has offered the burglar everything if he will spare her life; she has allowed him to steal the very finest of her garniture, the very richest of her wine, the very profoundest of her doctrines. She has paltered with the enemy; I have seen her at the street-corner paltering to see if there could not be some reconciliation made between old Christianity and new habitudes. Christianity ought never to compromise. When Christianity compromises Christianity kills her own genius. But we have now become accommodating, and we have given, and we have taken, and we have patched up, in too many cases, not in all, a hollow peace; and then some morning when the newspaper is opened by us we shudder because an anarchic operation has taken place in our own or some distant land. I think much now, getting on towards the eventide, of what the churches are doing with their original testimony. I listen to the preaching or read the sermons of the day to see how much Bible is in them, and a Bibleless sermon is an idiot's tale, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. The devil can stand any amount of that kind of talk, but what bruises his head is the Cross, the hated old-fashioned Cross. We must get it back, or we shall multiply or see multiplying assassination on every hand.

I could not but feel when I looked at the programme of the Œcumenical Conference that whatever may be said for some of us—and I hope a good deal can be said, and I have not the slightest doubt that a good deal could be said—I could not but feel that taken as a whole the great Methodist bodies have been peculiarly and characteristically faithful to the evangelical Gospel. They have not preached their own inventions, programmes, and ever-changing theories; they have delivered a message. And I specialise them now because in that great message, as delivered by a Methodist ministry, President McKinley was a profound believer. He believed in God, in Christ, and the Holy Spirit—names easy to forget—and that grand belief had everything to do with the beauty of his character, the benevolence of his disposition, and the moral weight of his influence. You tell me that in other churches the Gospel is faithfully

preached. I believe it, I know it, I thank God for it; but at the same time there has been in Methodism a consolidation of evangelical testimony quite remarkable. Throughout the whole of this Œcumenical Council we have heard no anti-evangelical word; the air has been full warm with evangelical piety.

Now where, with regard to many churches—let each examine itself—where is the saving Gospel in all its characteristic doctrines, in its integrity of devotedness, in the passion of its consecration? Where is family discipline? where is the Gospel charter of social duties? Shall I ask an old-fashioned question and be deemed an old-fashioned preacher? Where is obedience to parents? That is where anarchy begins—in disobedience to parents. You who are shocked because you heard the throb of a cannon or a gun, or saw the flashing of a red blade, do not perhaps sufficiently reflect that when you allowed your own little boy to disobey you, flout you, laugh at you, in that moment you yourself became the author of anarchy. Shall I ask another question, and thus show myself unfit for the occasion? Where is the family altar? Who struck it down? Your own sons or daughters; they became recalcitrant, they were in a hurry, they wanted to get off to business, and you gave up the family altar. When that altar was thrown down the spirit of anarchy, the social Satan entered the house, breaking up its unity, disturbing its relations, creating selfish tyranny or callousness on the one hand and insubordination or hostile contempt on the other. We came to hear about a murder, and we are listening to a lecture upon family discipline, and I think the lecture is right, I think the lecture goes to the right point. It is one of two things; either you as father, mother, must succumb, or you must rule in tender, in just, and beautiful righteousness. What! when we are breeding anarchists, what! are we weeping and howling over some poor wretch that under an infatuated mal-inspiration shot down the representative of order and justice? Are we innocent? Have we not allowed anarchy? I hear what you say, I have heard it till I would God I were deaf, that you must give way, that you did

not like to break the young will, you thought that perhaps it would be better. Let God be true, and every man a liar. Not to break the will, in a loving, genial, tender, but disciplinary sense, is to give licence to anarchy and open the way to the gallows. We have to do more than punish anarchy when it is caught red-handed in the person of some infatuated madman; we have to begin at the beginning, we have to go to the fount and origin, we have to anticipate the devil by the power of God. It is all written for us—would God we carried the New Testament charter with us, and ate it hour by hour for our souls' nourishment.

How is it to be done? To the New Testament! Do not you resolve yourselves into a committee to ascertain what is to be done with anarchy; go to the Book, to the law, to the testimony, to your own scriptures. Everything is in God's Book. Let us see how this great occasion would have been prevented, and how a new and glorious future is possible to all countries. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for"—boys and girls—"this is right." You hear that. "Honour thy father and mother." When you cease to honour your father you are preparing to murder the President. Do this "That it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth." I do not want the halfpenny programmes of a new socialism, it is all here, and here for ever; and until we follow it we shall have anarchy and miscreancy of every form and name. "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath." Don't play the fool with your own sons and daughters; be great-minded, tender-hearted, but have in you a sense of gentle and effective discipline. "Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." And there are yet some people agape all over the town to ascertain the new social programme! O God, it is a burden to Thine heart! Wait: "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men."

And ye masters, halt! wait! "Ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening; knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him." Why should we resolve ourselves into a committee, appointed to create a sub-committee with power to devolve its duties upon a subter-sub-committee to find out what is the best way of stamping out anything that is bad, stamping out a devil? It is all revealed, declared, in the epistles and in the gospels of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now will you go to some little political meeting, rise amid great cheers—O God, forgive us!—great cheers, and sit down in loud and long continued applause? I shall be glad if all this adulation can follow you if you have delivered your address on the political platform out of the New Testament. How you would frighten these men if you took out the New Testament and said, "Mr. Chairman, this subject is so luminously and effectively dealt with in the New ——" The meeting would break up, you would be howled at, you would be a pro-Boer, you would be a nuisance. What, a man is going to declare what his own Lord and Master has written and has said and has promulgated through His servants, and he is voted old-fashioned. Let me be old-fashioned. O my dear friends who are round about me this morning, be old-fashioned—good, real, juicy old-fashioned preachers, and you will stand when all the inventors and surface-mongers have vanished and are forgotten. The whole Bible is a text, every verse a text, every sentence a text, and all flushed and all throbbing with blood, the blood of salvation.

I know I could have made myself more popular to-day if I had spent my little time in denouncing the assassin, but I think that on reflection most of you will agree that the right tone has been taken, when advice is given to hunt out the springs and origins and beginnings of the thing. Crush the devil when he comes into the cradle to take away the dear little lives that double your own.

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we thank Thee for Thy house, for the sunshine that looks into it and smiles upon us as we gather around the altar. Surely this sun-blessing is a parable of still larger benediction ; we accept it as such, we thank God and take courage. We bless Thee for a quiet resting-place, we thank Thee that in Thy Son Thou dost cause the people to sit down, to sit down on the grass, to sit down by the seaside ; and Thou art always calling upon us to stand still and see the salvation of God. May we stand still in the strength of repose, in the calm of confidence ; it is not ours to be in haste ; Thy people do not rush and strive and cry, they are built upon the foundation that cannot be moved, unknown to the lightning, unknown to the thunder. Talk to us still, we humbly pray Thee, in the person of Thy Son, in picture and poem and mother-song, and sorrow's tears, and the joyous clash of the wedding bells ; may all these things be stories and poems from heaven, coming with every morning. Now that we have come together again in the quietude and security of God's own house, give us peace, hope, courage, that noble fearlessness which never defies. Oh that we might be sure that our sins were forgiven before we pass hence and be no more, and that we may have confidence that the other side has also received some token of pardoning love. The sin was wrought between two—may neither be a coward seeking for a selfish peace, but may both be one seeking for a common pardon and a common joy. Amen.

CLXI.

ONE THING, EVERYTHING.

"*Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?*"—MARK iv. 13.

HERE is a great philosophy in this inquiry, as there is in every inquiry propounded by the Son of God. If you know one, you know all. There is a master-key which opens all the locks; if you fail to lay hold of the master-key you will be fumbling round the locks all your days and never open a single cabinet or a single drawer. That is the great teaching of the text. If you do not know this parable you will know no parable at all. So I had better explain it to you at once, and give you the key without delay, and observe that what I am now giving you is the master-key. You will meet many persons who will try to expound the parable without the key. You will soon know whence they came; there is no boom of eternity in their voices; they are not voices, they are blurred echoes.

"Know ye not this parable?" Why, the meaning seemed to be upon the very face of it, and if you do not understand this parable all the other parables will be riddles and conundrums to you, but if you once get hold of this parable you have wealth for ever. If you know a grassblade you know all that astronomy can tell you. Let us think about that a moment. Think about it all your lifetime, if you please. It comes to that; it is all written, where everything else is written, in the first chapter of the book of Genesis. "God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass," and the earth became green with a wondrous loveliness, and has never lost her complexion, though the centuries have come and gone in troops and myriads not to

be counted. Jesus Christ is always telling us this, and we will not listen to Him. He says, in effect, If you understood one thing rightly, thoroughly, through and through, you would understand everything, you would understand, so far as is possible, God. But we poor blundering fools will ask for the second volume before we have read the first, and we say about the first volume that we have scanned it, we have perused it a little, we have looked into it here and there. O my long-suffering God, Thine own folks have looked into Thy Book here and there, and therefore have not looked into it at all. Pity us; do not take down the heavens until Thou hast converted the earth. If we understood one little cell in one little plant or life, we would have the universe at our command, in its great principles, its supreme purpose, its sublime and divine destiny. But who knows anything through and through, so that he can break off at the middle and begin again, begin at the end and go back to the beginning, and vary the lesson without losing its continuity and its music?

If you know one providence, you know the whole providential scheme. My dear sir, do think a moment: has no providence ever occurred in your life? Have you turned everything into blankness by your most accursed and graceless atheism? Think! Was there never an event in your life that made you say, "There is more in life than I thought"? Have you never seen almost a spirit?—it may have been but a flickering shadow, it may have been a flash of light, it may have been a tap at the midnight door of the sleeping chamber: O what was it? Why, my friend, can you not lay hold of any providence—the saving of your little child, you know, when she was but two years old; the saving of your life when everything in your family depended upon your life—can you not put on record one little simple providence? If you could do that what must you do? Go back to it, and say, "There, that is my standing-point; I know nothing about your fine arguments and metaphysical analyses, and I know nothing about your appeals to a certain kind of per-

verted reason; but I do know that one night when the swaling candle was being blown out by a cross-wind God did seem to come into our little house and make all things new; He put the candle in a safe place, where the wind could not get at it, and there was no more swaling, but it stood upright. All flame seeks the sun, and I cannot get over that. You may tell me about some book that has puzzled you, and about some science that you do not fully understand—"I do not contemn it, I do not deny it, I simply do not understand it, but nothing can blot out of my heart's love that one night's battle and that one night's victory." That will do; if you understand that parable you may understand, as to purpose and final meaning, all the providences that make up the day of your sorrow.

Do not admit anything unless you mean to pursue the argument when you are confronting Christ and are face to face with Him, because if you admit anything you admit Him; if you admit anything you admit God; be careful. If you admit that to wash your hands is a good thing you have admitted the whole Christian argument. Good actions do not end in themselves, good actions are the beginnings of arguments. If the washing of your hands is a good thing, why not wash more, why not wash more of the surface of the body? If the bathing of the body is a good thing, is there no bathing of the mind, is there no steeping and soaking of the soul in the divine river? You cannot stop with hand-washing and be a logician, you can stop with hand-washing and be an ungrateful unbeliever; but if you admit that in any one thing civilisation is better than savagery, you have admitted all that Christ wants you to admit; if you understand that parable, you understand all parables in their wondrous, poetic, ideal, ineffable meaning. God will not allow us to break off where we like; He does not say, Now you can be eclectic, and just take out of this Christian scheme or this general doctrine of Mine any little pieces you like you can begin where you please and end where you please, and all will be well. No; He says, The argument is one. He will not allow us to go in with a little hammer and to break the crystals of His sanc-

tuary. He says, "If you break the very smallest of these crystals you have broken all." At first that sounds irrational, but it is the Lord's word, and we have lived to prove it. If you can trifle with one little crystal and say, "This is only a little crystal, I will break it, I will crush it," you will go on to say, "Well, now, the next crystal is not much larger, hardly any larger at all, I can scarcely tell you which is which, but I think there can be no particular guilt or wrong-doing if I break this next crystal, and the next one is a very little bigger." And so you go on with your breaking until it becomes a familiar exercise to you, and at last you give up the Sabbath and the Bible and the altar and God and yourself.

What great lessons this text suggests! See the unity of Christ's teaching. To our poor half-educated eyes the teaching often seems to be disjointed, but who gave us the final vision, what right have we to say that this is correct, and that is only partially correct, or to make any such foolish judgments upon the great scheme of God? What is unity? what is consistency? Perhaps there is hardly a term in the language that is open to so much misconception as consistency. You say about a certain man, "He has been very consistent throughout." What do you mean? If he has preached the same sermon twice every Sunday and once every Thursday for thirty odd years, would you say he is consistent? Nothing of the kind; quite a blunder and quite an insult offered to the spirit of consistency. Orthodoxy is not in words; it is in blood-drops, in heart-throbs, in a purpose that cannot be quenched. A man may have verbally contradicted himself every time he has spoken, and yet he may be perfectly consistent in the sight of God as to his purpose and design and holy prayer. I have believed that there is no consistency where there is any growing. I believe that in the vase that holds the flowers there is great consistency. That is exactly where we saw it years ago, but these are not the flowers we saw a month since, these are not the flowers we saw a week ago. Something has taken place. What has taken place? Love, life, the relation of things to the whole universe. You may, I may,

have been consistent as a vase is, and if the vase is left to undergo the rusting process of time it will be even venerable as well as consistent. Very venerable, and Old Mortalities will be coming to look into it and wonder what was written upon it. That is a kind of consistency. Oh, give me the consistency of the growing flower, the expanding, fruit-bearing tree; let the leaves shed themselves every year, and the next year I know the apple will be bonnier, the pear will be sweeter, the tree will be larger and more capacious to receive more sunshine and produce more fruitful benedictions. God bless all growing things. This is the power, this is the beauty of the teaching of Christ; it is all one, it never breaks itself into two opposing and dissevered parts; from the beginning to the end it is one blessing, one gospel, one thought of love and healing and redeeming blood.

Notice, secondly, the surprise of disappointed teachers. What, said Christ, "Know ye not this parable?"—I thought you, even you, so young in discipleship and so green in knowledge, even you would have seen the meaning that I have been endeavouring to convey. How often we are disappointed in our hearers, as well as in our preachers! I do not know that that is a subject much talked of abroad; but, you know, it is quite as possible for you to disappoint the preacher as it is for the preacher to disappoint you. I would say to any audience of a large multitudinous kind, You may have inflicted great pain upon your teachers; their best sentences you did not understand, their holiest prayers you did not follow even to the height of the roof of the sanctuary; there was a great waste of pearls upon you. Who thinks of that? Not a soul. The preacher is expected to create and re-create, and to perform resurrectional miracles: he wants help from the other side, he wants the sympathetic face, the encouraging eye, the radiant appreciation and sign that his words are not falling in stony places. You should preach a sermon, you might preach more than one, upon the disappointments of Christ. He was so often disappointed. Oh to have overheard His mental observations as He went away from the multitude, and gave, so to say, a report of His effort to the

heavenly hearers! Listen to Him: "They were so dull to-day, they looked as the oxen might look, there was no real appreciation of My message; there was a certain intellectual quickening, a certain inquiry about more or less unimportant things, but, O ye heavenly ones who dwell in the secret place of the tabernacles of the Most High, the men to whom I have been talking to-day never got at the soul of the subject; they took it as a matter of course, they were not thrilled as by a trumpet; they perfectly acquiesced in the close of the sermon because they would be done with it and forget it at once: I come back to you, sweet heavenly friends, to tell you that to-day I have reaped nothing but darkness; and the men I hoped to have blessed have turned Me into a conundrum and made Me a part of a wooden system of theology." He was disappointed; He came and looked at the tree, not for leaves, but for fruit, and He was disappointed; He came to His disciples looking for faith, and He found none; and He said, "Do you think there will be any faith on the whole earth when I come back again?" It is so disheartening to talk to people who do not answer you in the great silence of love, in the sublime applause of obedience.

And yet see, on the other hand, a right disposition towards Christian knowledge. They went and said to Him, "What is the meaning of this parable?" Be that said in memory of these men; they went for the meaning. "Tell us the soul of it." That is the right disposition of the soul towards all Christian teaching. Now, stripping the whole thing of its surroundings, its shells, and searching into the kernel, what does it mean? It all means one thing; the Lord Himself gathered up the whole speech of His heart into one sentence which reads as two: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and mind and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." It is a poor philosophy that cannot be wrapped up into one cannon-ball sentence; it is a poor sermon that cannot be condensed into the briefest message. We have that brief message to-day. Know one thing thoroughly, and you know all. See how much may depend upon knowing one thing,

Do you not know this parable? What you do know in any department of your life, know it so that nobody can take it from you. There is so much partial knowledge, so much hesitant and uncertain information. Now Christ calls upon us to know one thing, and hold on to it. "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Who? O say it again, thou man of certainty! "I know that my Redeemer liveth." That will help the ages; if they keep up that testimony it will ring down the centuries, and æons hence people will applaud the singing of it as a revelation from heaven.

Now, what is that little one thing you know in your house—that answered prayer? When I came up to this pulpit from my vestry, I was obliged to fall upon my knees and say to God, "I cannot go up there to-day with this horrible pain and detestable sickness of the whole week. I dare not go up, I cannot go, unless Thy Presence go with me." Having said that, and waited a moment, I said, "I will go." The voiceless man got back his voice, and the pained man triumphed over his anguish. I will hold on to that. Here is a man with an argument, but here is another man with a fact. You stand by facts, you hold on, if it is but with finger and thumb, to the hem of the garment of Christ. In the latter days perplexing men will come who will try to puzzle your faith and distress it by the suggestion of many wonders and possibilities and impossibilities—have you got the hem of that garment safely between your finger and thumb? Yes. Then keep it there, and when the spoiler has ceased for a moment take another turn of the hem around another finger, and when you have an opportunity, a moment of cessation from the seductive influence of the devil, put another fold of the hem around your heart, and then at last you will have such a hold that nothing can discompose your faith or seriously injure the music of your song. You do not expect to know all the Bible. I do not know it. I have been working on it all these years, and I am just beginning to see that I might begin again, because all the beauty is in the beginning, and then all the beauty is in the end, and then all the beauty is in the very centre. And so the Book says, Begin where you can, but

what you do know, know it, let the heart know it, let your heart keep it, be sure of that one thing.

Now you do not expect a dear Christian youth who is coming to communicate in your church to know all the Thirty-nine Articles, all the Westminster Confession of Faith, all the distinctive principles of Anglicanism, Congregationalism, Presbyterianism, and all the views that have been held by all the fathers in all the ages. Do not expect anything so iniquitous, as well as monstrous. The little child comes and says, "I love Jesus." That is right, my dear; come to the sacrament, take the bread and the blood, and God bless you: "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." And would you turn away the dear old friend who has spent the most of her life over the washing-tub in order to get a few pence every day and eke out a poor living in the week? You do not expect her to understand the whole Nicene Creed. She never heard of it—thank heaven!—but she says, "I love Jesus, I need Jesus, I cling to Jesus; may I come in?" I say, "My dear friend, you are in, you are at the very centre; keep in, hold fast, know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge."

This is how I have been living all the time. Of course I have in a certain way been compelled to look into this book and that book, to hear what objectors and the like have to say, but they have said nothing that I have cared to remember. That is my testimony. Observe, that in these closing days I am bearing witness, I am taking an oath, I am writing my signature as firmly as I can write it, and it is to this effect, that I have never gone away from the Bible without being right glad to get back to it. That is my experience. You cannot oppose a fact by a frivolous argument. I never know how wonderful the Bible is in all its histories and parables until I have tried to live without it a little time. And let this also be set down by the scribe and preserved in the records of this church for ever: I have never gone away to seek recreation, amusement, entertainment, I have never gone in pursuit of laughter and hilarity, without being glad to get back to the old hymn-book and the old psalm tunes, and all the memories

that make my recollection an immortality. So I ask all you young people to think of this. I know I shall stand a poor chance for the time being with many merry-makers and persons who ask you to spend your money on devices for frightening away your spirits of dulness and depression. I shall have a poor chance with them just now, but the preacher's time is coming, the time of saving power and influence is coming, the time of the Cross is coming. Hope thou in God!

The beautiful singing of this beautiful piece ("Sometime we'll understand") reminds me of a little delicate kindness which I would not for the world omit to remember, and that is that some few members of the choir have resolved that I shall always have a flower in the pulpit on Thursdays as well as Sundays. The Sunday has been well kept up by the Christian Endeavour Society, but now some three or four friends in the choir have asked themselves why the Thursday pulpit should go naked, and the answer is in these beautiful flowers which are in evidence this morning. These are not the things we regret when all comes to all, and the last good-bye has to be spoken. I thank my friends. By their flowers they preach to me.

I have been thinking lately how many things in my life have ended. There will be no broken column now when I go, because I have completed the People's Bible in five-and-twenty volumes, and I have just completed the Pulpit Bible—750,000 words of my own. I have just entered upon the completing part of my second Presidency of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. I have established by the grace of God, and by that alone, this Thursday morning service, so that nobody can say it is in an experimental stage. If a thing has survived thirty-two years I think it may survive a few more. If it had ended at the period of three months it would have been an experiment, and a failure, but God kept the lamp going, He supplied the oil, and the oil fed the fire. Blessed be His glorious Name! Well, things have to end. Sometimes a man's life is broken off just at the very moment of his supreme ambition and most kindling and hopeful desire. It cannot be so with me. Things have ended. The fool said, "He will never finish that," and he finished it. God did it—God, God, God. The mocker said that when he built the City Temple on the claypit or in the claypit of Holborn Viaduct, it was impossible for it to succeed; and now the same croaking prophets want to borrow the place for their own meetings. Do not be cast down, O my soul, and do not let your

soul be cast down ; if you are rigid in God, and if you mean it all, and mean it well, God will bring it to pass, He will bring it to a radiant and blessed consummation. When I began the Thursday service some dear old friends who knew no better said that I might get "A few Non Cons."—by which they meant Nonconformists—some people are fond of abbreviations—I might get a few Non Cons. to look in on a Thursday. But now I think it is the Cons. that look in just as much as the Non Cons. ; and in the sight of God I say that some of my Conformist hearers have been my best friends and best supporters in every sense. So I thank God that I do not belong to this little section or that little section ; I am a member of all the churches because I am a member of the one Church, redeemed with blood, sanctified by the Holy Ghost. The longer I live the less I care for little and trivial distinctions, and the more I care for that all-uniting and all-sealing love which is the proof of God's presence and God's care. Let us therefore stand up, men, brethren, and fathers, and with thirty-two years behind us, sing "Praise God from whom all blessings flow !"

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the triune God, abide with us, till we reach the city in which there is no death, neither shall there be any more pain. Amen.

[*Sunday Morning, 29th September*, 1901.]

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, this is none other than Thine own house. May we see Thy face with the eyes of our love. This we pray in the Name which makes prayer, and we are sure that the answer will not be withheld. We bless Thee we can come back again to the old place, to the altar we built at the first; we can take up reminiscences full of brightness and tenderness and possibilities of joy undreamed-of. May we never be careless about old and precious associations; may we keep the things that remind us of the Lord's death and the Lord's coming. Forbid that we should give up the gold and silver of our love, that they may be turned to base uses. Our memories are our jewels, our recollections are our confidences. We are thus rich in the Lord and strong in the power of His might. Forbid that any thief should break through and steal or any cancer should bite the treasure of the heart. We desire to confess to Thee that we can only pray as Thou dost help us to pray. Lord, teach us how to pray. We have not because we have not asked, or we have asked amiss; we have spoiled our prayer. We have brought to Thee mean, selfish prayers which Thou couldst not answer; we have brought to Thee mean notions and thoughts of Thyself; we have prayed largely about our little selves and our little families and our little causes, and about our own little garden, and we have not really cared if the universe died of thirst if there was rain enough for our corner. We have called this prayer; so we have multiplied unbelievers and gratified infidels and set them laughing at our littleness. We have not known the compass, the majesty of prayer, we have not dwelt in the secret places of the tabernacles of the Most High; we have been wayside creatures, poor mean pilgrims who have not entered into the inner places of God's thought. So we have been fickle, doubtful, unbelieving, perverse, and falling seven times daily, until we have felt that we were not worth picking up again; and we called it prayer, the gabble of the soul, the wordiness of emptiness. Teach us how to pray; through the power of the Cross may we grow in grace, may we grow away from all things technical and transient and man-made, and stand near the very fountain of light. May we continually find our prayer in the Cross; we want largeness of heart, clearness of vision, sensitiveness, sympathy with all things good and beautiful. This is Thy prayer; we would make it ours, and ask at the Cross for God's Amen.

CLXII.

WORTHLESS PRAYERS.

"*Let them not say . . . We have swallowed him up.*"—PSALM xxxv. 25.

E have devoured him with devouring. David is in one of his lowest moods. He becomes at this point a poor creature, like the rest of us. The psalm is the meanest thing in Christian records. We see in Psalm xxxv. how low and little a man can become. It is a mean prayer; it is the cheapest, meanest talk ever breathed in the face of heaven. We should consider prayerless prayer, mean prayer, that we may get rid of it, and that we may, after all, the root of the Cross having been in the earth two thousand years, some time begin to pray. I have read the psalm over and over again, to see if I can find any jewel in it. It is full of conceit and boasting, the man does not see the heaven he is talking to. Why does he vex his soul, as we do, by calling his enemies about him and mentioning them by name, and saying how wicked they have been to him? He knows that he is the darling of God, but the most of other people are the outcasts of heaven. That could not be done to-day? you ask; I tell you it is done every day, in new words, in new forms. We are the people, and the others are not; we are the temple, and the others are in the outside courts; we know the orthodoxy, and they do not. What poor trivial creatures we are! As if we knew anything about orthodoxy, as if there were any orthodoxy worth knowing but one, and that is penitential love, seeking pardon at the Cross, and a commission to go out and save other people.

What a prayer this is! How conscious the man is of himself all the time! He will have his enemies near him that he may blow upon them; he says:

"Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt. Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the Lord chase them." And this is said to be a prayer! It is not prayer. It is a kind of religious abuse, it is piety at the most insolent point; it is a poor little human creature who wants all the artillery of the universe to be engaged on his side to blow the opposing guns to atoms. What I want to gather from this whole exhibition of human nature at its worst and human nature at prayer is that I may pray more largely, more nobly, more sweetly, and never mention my enemies. If a man once begin to count his enemies, his enemies have already gained advantage over him. He should not know them. Thou a son of God, with seven crowns upon thine head, anointed with oil from the oliveyards of God, asking the great Creator to sweep thine enemies away as the wind would blow the chaff! It is man, it is yet most human, it is one of the most arrant and deadly heresies of the Church. It is most sad to see our friends when they take up their own case and ask God particularly to interest Himself in their little oppositions and controversies. It is not thus that the Almighty works; it is by another sweep that He brings in His kingdom. Oh, the littleness, the prayerlessness, the godlessness of some prayers! "Bless, we beseech Thee, O Lord, our garden. Never mind the garden that is over the wall; the man that has that garden did me an injury, was very offensive and obnoxious to me in many ways; I want Thy rain to come straight down and steadily into my little plot, and let him learn, by his want of rain, that he had better not insult me any more. Amen." A poor prayer! It is a prayer in the sense of being an outspoken wish to some not-listening deity, but it is not prayer; we shall see better specimens than this if we turn over a page in the great record.

How possible it is to be both praying and sinning at the same time! "Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: Let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my

hurt. Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt: let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify themselves against me." And the Lord's heaven takes up its blue skirt and shakes such wickedness back in the face of the blasphemers who uttered such impiety. O, if we knew what prayer is we would have less of it that we might have more of it. Who can bear to hear the patterers who are always praying about their own little things and their own little prosperities, and who are always calling in the great Physician away from the four corners of His universe to attend to a wound that has been inflicted upon their own hands? We are great at making a convenience of God; He is a kind of superior manservant, we hold Him and pay Him the wages of our patronage. It is wrong, and therefore the Church is a broken-backed cripple, anonymous, despicable.

I notice from this prayer how possible and easy it is to desire the destruction of enemies rather than their conversion. Let us think about that a moment. Have we really been praying for the conversion of our enemies, or for their destruction? Have we been looking into the vessel to see whether there is brimstone enough yet to choke them? Or have we been looking away to the great charities and the infinite redemptions that may turn a Judas Iscariot into an Apostle John? Oh, the moaning and the whining about our own little hurts and pricks and scratches; oh, the want of that great charity out of whose womb came the Cross! It is quite true that there are persons who imagine in all sincerity that they are the special favourites of God. I have never gone to them in my trouble. It is perfectly possible, though you will think it inconceivable, that a man should pray for a fine day for his Sunday-school excursion, and be rather glad if the next day is not altogether as good as it should be when somebody else's excursion is coming off. That is the mystery of electing grace, showing that he is the darling of God, and the other people not singing out of his hymn-book are persons not wholly to be trusted. Now this has come out in words, I have it on record

signed and dated, and yet I am prepared to say that, without the *ipsissima verba*, we have the thing, the spirit, the mean littleness to-day rampant in church and family. The subject, therefore, is mean prayers, worthless prayers, prayers that ought never to have been uttered, prayers that ought only to be permitted to continue on the record that they may stand there as warnings to admonish us not to perpetrate the same littleness. Why do we not pray for everybody? For the Roman Catholics? you inquire. Certainly. And the Anglicans? Certainly. But how could you pray for the Greek Church? Because I can pray for the whole world of humanity. But you never pray for these people who are in the gutter and who are drinking themselves down to the devil as fast as they can gallop the poison? Yes; some of them are good men, some downright good souls have been floored by the devil. I think I saw you sweep past the poor demon-struck wretch, and go home to take another draught of your own special concoction of piety. Yet that man, poor man, whom you avoided and abandoned, was saying in his heart, "God help me, I wish I could do better, I wish I could recover my childhood; O, if I could lay this poor weary burning head on my mother's lap!" And an angel went past, and kissed him. You must take a larger view of things—not in my poor little flower-bed, my poor little rosery; but take an interest in all the area of growth, and say, Send a plentiful rain upon Thine inheritance, Thou God of the waters. You wonder that prayer is not answered; I do not, I am thankful that it is not answered. Of course, it would be delightful to see every enemy of mine caught, decapitated, and his head sold for what it would fetch in the market-place. Would that be Christian? That depends upon your Christianity; there are some people who would think it the very finest specimen of Christianity, but it is a rather good fat specimen of the devil's devilry.

Now will you compare the prayers of David with the prayers of Jesus, or with the instructions of Jesus, for His instructions were but aspects of His prayers. What did Jesus Christ teach us? He taught us to care less and less for the merely personal; He said, "Do not distress your soul about something that belongs,

to all appearance at least, to you only; you must get to the right elevation before you can see things." The men who made the map of England or any other area did not make it from the low level of a sunken pit. Where did they see the whole area that was to be mapped and coloured? They saw it from a high point of triangulation, it was with the elevated theodolite that they saw where the land lay, where the steeples glimmered, and where the high fields offered their sheen as a sacrifice to the sun. When we get the right level we shall be able to draw a correct map, and in the midst of the map and on every side of it we shall find the uniting Cross. So you are going to take up your case with David. "Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the Lord chase them. Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the Lord persecute them. Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall." Then I must ask you to leave the Lord's Table, I must ask you to authorise me to take your name off any church roll, and if you will not do it, then I must burn the roll that holds your name.

Now how glorious it is to compare such prayers with the spirit and method and custom of Christ. That is the reason why I have magnified the darkness of the one picture that I might set forth in more blazing radiance the beauty of the second. Is there any thirty-fifth psalm in all the sweet talk of Jesus? No; there is a twenty-third psalm. Many of the psalms are in the prayers and communings of Jesus with the Father, but there is no thirty-fifth psalm. But does not He mention His enemies? Yes, He does; hear Him, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"—they do not understand the keenness of their own sword, the blasphemy of their own lips; they are really devil-driven; lay not this sin to their charge; forgive them—forgive them! Then He signed in blood the charter of deity. Did He not often speak about enemies? Yes; in imagination I hear Him now saying, "It hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt love thy friend, and hate thine enemy; I have come to reverse all that; I say unto

you, Love your enemies." Now we are getting into the region of prayer, we are certainly getting into the region that makes prayer possible, the great holy redeeming prayer. Let me see, what did you say when I heard you pray? There was not one universal word in it, not a word that could fly over a ditch; when you gabbled out your ignorance in the ear of heaven you said, "Bless our corner of Thy vineyard, and specially bless this section of Thy Zion." As if the Lord had any special sections of Zion! Oh, the meanness of it, and the poor foolish idea that is conceived of God by people who can pray in this degrading and degraded fashion. Once I heard Him say, and I hear Him say to-day in holy and excited and inspired imagination, "Return not evil for evil." What a new word! What new planet is this that has rolled into the ken of the telescope that searches the moral atmosphere of the other and the higher skies? "It hath been said by them of old time, A tooth for a tooth, and an eye for an eye: But I say unto you, Resist not evil." That man can pray; whenever he prays the heavens seem at his disposal. We can only pray as we get into that level of pureness and sweet charity. If thou bringest thy gift to the altar, and rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, go and tell him, speak about it, ask God to be the third party, and get rid of it; and then come, drink sacramental wine and feed thy strength with heavenly bread.

What is the answer of the soul to all these people who take up their umbrellas and go walking out in order to defend themselves and to show how mighty little they are? It is this: "If a man's ways please the Lord, the Lord will undertake the enemies." You see, that is where we lost so much time; we began fighting our own enemies; we might have been a mile further on but for that scuffle in the valley. Hear this, it comes on the sweet summer wind, that wind fragrant with countless millions of flowers that lived in the obscurity of the valley—hear this voice, that will say to you in years to come and make you happy on the day of death, "If a man's ways please the Lord, He will make even his enemies to be at peace with him." The greatest enemy I ever had

in the world has come to me shoeless, coatless, breadless, to ask me to give him another chance. That man gave me the greatest chance I ever had in the world, to forgive all that in Christ's name. He knew not that whilst I was giving him a loaf he was feeding me with festival." Well, but there are men who have been like David, gone through all these troubles, persecutions, difficulties, and obstructions, and they are now at this very moment forging weapons against me," you say—I am imagining your case. Are you a good man? I mean to say, can you lay your hand upon your heart, and in the presence and fear and love of God, say that you do desire to be saved by Jesus Christ? "Yes, I can penitently and humbly say that; God knows all things, He knows that I love Him." Very well, then we start from that point. You tell me that your enemies are making weapons and instruments of divers kinds to be used against you? "Yes, I have intelligence to that effect." I have a message for you; if you love Jesus, if you want to love Him, if you have associated your destiny with His Cross, I have a message for you. "Pray, dear sir, tell me the message, for I am sick at heart." Are you ready? Are you listening with your soul? "Yes." Then here is the message:—"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper."

You do not know with what eagerness, thankfulness, and joy I find myself back in the old footprints. I have heard with great and glowing satisfaction of the most interesting and profitable services which have been held here during the interval between our separation and our re-union. I have heard nothing that is not good and cheering and truly religious in its spirit and appreciation. God's blessing be upon all the brethren who have stood here to maintain the Lord's testimony, and make them full of delight when they minister in their own places, and fill them with memories of having been here that will enable them when occasion arises to return to a place in which they have been so truly and gratefully appreciated.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the triune God, abide with us, till ends life's transient dream. Amen.

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thou hast formed us, and not we ourselves. Thou art our living Father; Thou wilt not forsake the work of Thine own hands. Do men make vessels that they may break them on the wheel and throw them away? and wilt Thou, being wiser than the wisdom of men, make us, form us, inspire us, shape us into Thine own image, that Thou mayest crush us under the heel of destiny? God is love: all men have told us so. Far away back, before the centuries began to be counted, men knew that they did not make themselves; they had the witness in their own hearts, they treasured a holy and ineffable consciousness. By-and-by they were able to speak in words which they understood, one nation understanding another, and the speech was of God, and man, and destiny; yea, here and there one spake of blood and redemption and sacrifice and righteousness. Withdraw us by the power of Thy Spirit, we humbly pray Thee, from looking at things in mere shadows and in small relations. Oh, if need be, build some high mountain for us, and take us to the sanctuary of its height, and from its windows show us that through all things there runs a living Deity. If now and then we have been caught in mere detail, and have played the momentary atheist, God forgive us! it was ignorance grown to madness. Thou hast brought us back to the right point of view, and now we see that all things centre in Thyself, and that hell and the dragon, and the lake of fire, and the beasts without name, shall all be brought into relation—who knows what relation?—to Thy ruling throne. We have learned all this at the Cross, which with our hearts we kiss. Amen.

CLXIII.

NOTHING BUT MIRACLES.

"*They went through the flood on foot.*"—PSALM lxvi. 6.

HAT is really all I can say; if I were to add anything to that I would be adding prose to poetry, and poor, bald, rough paint to the finest colours used by finest artists. When will people believe that the text is the sermon? In this case we have sermon and text in one most surely. "They went through the flood on foot." Believe it, and you are a Christian; deny it, and you leave the Church, turn your back on the so-called sanctuary, and become your own altar and idol.

Surely this little text cannot be misquoted. Looking at it, you will discover that each word is a complete syllable. Are there some five or six syllables in this text? Yes. What are they? "They went through the flood on foot." Do not complain of hard words, do not say, These are preachers' words which only preachers can understand. These are child's words, nursery words; a little child might babble them as he sat on your knee. These are the great texts. "God is love." There is always a sense of something strange in the Bible. Who has made it strange? Not the world, but the Church. We are fond of puzzle-making; we make a recreation in polysyllables. I wonder the world, the strong-headed sagacious world, does not take the Church by the throat and shake it into common sense. We think that the miracles are confined to the New Testament; we say, Have you read Trench on the Miracles? I say, What miracles? The miracles. Where are *the* miracles? laying the emphasis on the "the" with all the force of your soul. Why do people not understand the New Testament miracles? Because they have never studied the Old Testament miracles.

If a man has not really studied the language in which he was born he cannot grapple with the greatest mysteries, duties, and problems of literature. Even we must begin with the alphabet. A man thinks he can jump in anywhere upon the Christian line, and sit down and talk with the doctors and all the learned men, men of experience and men of great unction, and men gifted with the genius of prayer and possessed of the key of supplication. This cannot be done. We grow in grace, we grow into the New Testament. There are persons who have great difficulties about the miracles, meaning by the miracles the miracles of the New Testament; but if they had begun at the first chapter of Genesis, all the New Testament miracles would have fallen in like sequels, conclusions, consummations, the very things we were looking for. We cannot—I say it as an old retiring preacher—we cannot get the people to read the Bible. We think that miracles are confined to the Old Testament; why, they fill the whole Bible. When God said, "Let there be light," then the miracles began, and when He shall say Amen, the miracles will close; but He has not said Amen yet. If we had made a right use of the Old Testament we should have no difficulty about the New. How is it with you in the City? Do you let a young man leap into your office from the common highway, and say, "I will take up your book-keeping for you. Let me see, where are all your invoices, ledgers, day-books, waste-books, and the like? I will do it; I know nothing at all about it, I have spent my time on the sea, but I will look at it all"? You would turn him out of the office, but you would find a place for him in the Church, and you would appoint archdeacon so-and-so and pastor somebody else to wait upon him and comfort him. I would not. There is sense in all things; there ought to be a sense of proportion even in the Church, and men ought not to be able to leap from the common occupations of life and deliver opinions about the Testaments that are so old, so full of the juice of a vine unseen. It is the great business of some men in life to hold their tongue.

The miracles of Jesus Christ ought to be commonplaces to us. Let us place ourselves in imaginative

relation to the whole conception. Jesus Christ took hold of the child by the hand, and said, Arise! He stopped the bier on the road and said, Young man, go home with thy mother, and make her glad as with a new son. Jesus Christ said, Come forth; weary hearts wait for thee; they cannot read this riddle of momentary separation at all, and I will not press them under a burden too heavy for them to bear: Lazarus, come forth! He helped to get men into closer relation and fuller understanding with God. If we had read our way up through all the Testament to this point we should have accepted it as a commonplace. Christ made no bother about it; He never said, "Gentlemen, miracles if you please! Stand up for miracles!" Never; He grows the daisy without a word, He brings in the summer in silence fit for her queenliness, He makes no jarring, creaking noise as He rolls up the gates of the morning. But we begin where we please, and therefore God disappoints us. We begin at unaccustomed places, and say, There are many mysteries. We make the mysteries, and we must suffer for them. Why do miracles fill the Bible? Shall I tell you? Many know, some may not know. Why do miracles fill the Bible? Because they fill life. You do not suppose that the Bible has told all it knows, you do not suppose that the Bible could now tell all that is to be told by-and-by. The Bible can only deliver its own letters sealed, and on the seal there is written, Not to be opened until the thirtieth century—century 150. The leaves that are already opened you may read, mark, and inwardly digest; they are food for your soul. These other letters are all sealed, each a legend of its own:—To be read when the earth is seventy thousand years of age; when society has been on earth five hundred millenniums, then you may open this seal. But there is a rascally desire to open the seals before the time, because man is naturally, under-naturally, a thief. All men are thieves.

Miracles fill our human life. Some people do not understand them by the name miracles, but we understand them all by the name Providence—providences, divine arrangements, the holy, sweet, beneficent promises of God. Do you suppose that any man could argue me into a belief that there has

been no providence in my life? Why, he could as soon argue me into the conviction that I had no existence. I carry the proof in my heart; I see the finger of God. All men would see it if they looked for it. Some men have to have everything pointed out to them. Other men are born with vision, and they see from the very first day. I would point you down to your own life, the Bible of your own experience. But as a teacher my difficulty with you is that you want to wriggle out of the plain explanation of facts. You say, "Of course it was very wonderful, but it would have been quite as wonderful under other circumstances." Perhaps; well now, the doctors complain of that; even doctors are human. They come, they examine you, they overhaul you thoroughly, they make a professional or official report on you, and they prescribe a certain course of treatment, and you adopt it, and get better, and then you say, "Well, of course, I might have got better without it." Poor doctors! And you pay their bills with a groan. Why did you not go on without them? And yet, after calling them in and adopting their regime, and getting better, you say, "Of course it might have been all right the other way." What did you take? "Well, I took a course of homœopathy." O, what a dreadful thing! "I might have got better if I had adopted a course of allopathy." And you adopted allopathy, and got well, and said you might have got well if you had followed the old homœopathic system. There is no dealing with you; you are fools. Why do you not accept the great events of life, the marvellous events, put them into shape, into relation, watch the growing temple? Why do you not wait for forty years before you pronounce an opinion upon some mystery in your life? This will be revealed to you within forty years of its occurrence; in the meantime, get to the plough and the harrow, and the suffering, the discipline, and the toil, and the withering and the tormenting disappointments of life; go through them, and this day forty years you will open the Bible and say, "I never saw that before; why, there it is; I wonder I should have missed it, it is staring me in the face." Perhaps your eyes were held that you should not see: there is a ministry of concealment; it is the

glory of God to conceal a thing." He teaches by gradual revelation, He lifts the curtain leisurely, almost mockingly, and at last all the light blazes; you see the occurrences as they are related to one another, and you build an Ebenezer, you sing a new song to the Lamb.

Some of us could never get hold of the revelation of God through books; it has been a perplexity to some of us; we were not trained to read books; we could read the mere letter well enough, but reading the letter is often a very superficial and unprofitable exercise. We have never got much of the kingdom of heaven through books. How have we then received it? Through providences, interpositions, deliverances, things we could not understand, but we felt sure about them all the time, even while the coffin was disappearing from the face of the earth, that out of that grave would come some rose of Sharon, some lily of the valley, not to-morrow, but onward, yonder, after the jubilees have breathed themselves out. Some of us have got all we have through experiences. We do not understand them intellectually. Many a man has good understanding who has really no literature at all; the pity is that he professes to have any literature. George Stephenson when he invented the locomotive knew nothing about letters and nothing about technical mathematics. If you had said, "George, now are you good at pure mathematics, at mixed mathematics?" he would have said he never heard of them before. His son Robert came into all these things through books, through the algebras and the trigonometries and the conic sections and all the various hard words; and old George, looking at him, said, "Ah, there's our Robert figuring away on slate, but he is all wrong!" And how knoweth this man these things seeing he hath never learned, and never learned letters? They are the men I love to hear. O some of these mountain voices, O the sweet notes that are wafted on the daisy meadow as the milkmaid goes for her morning task! Ah, the things that have been done without the masters, the masters that have had no masters, the births out of season! It is so that some of us have learned the Bible, and others have had

visions. You and I may not have had these visions, but that is no reason why we should despise visions in other people. I tell you frankly that all this movement, all these cross-currents, all these rappings and signs and contortions and gropings-after have a meaning. They may be the work of knaves; in many instances, no doubt they are; they may be mistaken movements of the soul; yet I cannot despise all these things. There is behind everything something greater than has ever yet been seen. Despise nothing, but do not fly after things untested and untried whilst there is so much work to be done on your own hearthstone, in your own house, among your own children. There are many persons that have great public gifts that bring in no money, immense stores of genius that let the family at home starve. Do not follow these men, or be like the man of whom it is said:

> And so every day he gave the Almighty advice,
> Which he deemed of great worth,
> And his wife took in sewing to keep things agoing,
> While he superintended the earth.

If you know that man, I pray you avoid him. Life is a wonderful conundrum. Nothing happens in vain. O hear me say so and appraise my testimony as you please. I have now lived to that point that I dare not indicate to a driver of a carriage the way when he takes the road that I am not accustomed to; I say, "It is all right; I do not like this way, I prefer the other way, but when all comes to all I shall know that there is something going on in the usual road that would have hindered me or hurt me," and therefore I now live in God, and up to this time He has always brought me home.

Sirs, men, brethren, and fathers, we have lived this text; we ourselves are living miracles. How do you happen to be where you are? "Ah," you reply, "many a time I have thought of that. If my poor old mother could see me in this office in the City of London she would be quite sure I had stolen something, she would be very anxious to get out of the way until she could speak to me privately, and inquire however I had come to have an office so

large and so fine, and boys working in connection with me, and men working under me; why, I should have to fortify the sweet old creature considerably before she would believe that her boy that used to bring in the kine in the gloaming away out on the grey hills could have come to this position." And God has sometimes said to a man in the City, "See, you know how you began; you used to tend the sheep." Ah, I had forgotten that! Yes, but that is a fact; you used to call in and number the cattle night by night. Who brought you out of all that obscurity and set you in bright Jerusalem, David? Speak thy benefactor's name; is this the doing of the Son of Jesse or is it the doing of the Trinity? Forms have changed, and forms always will change, but the mystery still prevails and abounds. Life is always a mystery; it is often a mystery of darkness, but it can by the grace of God be turned into a mystery of light. Even now they are taking a sunbeam to pieces and trying to find out exactly what it is composed of, putting all the elements back again and so forth. And they cannot tell what life is. No man can define light, no man can define love, no man can define life, no man can define God. And yet the prigs that are trying to define light have abstained altogether from associating themselves with those who worship the living God. Oh the insanity! Surely this madness is approaching, asymptotically at least, sanity. God has gone forward in His movement so as to enable us to stop at certain stations. He knows that if it were a great express engine that was going right round the whole circle of infinity at once, first that it would never get there, and secondly that all the passengers would be frightened to death, and so He says, Stop! What is the name of this station? It is a little station He has built on the infinite curve, and He has built many such stations, and the name of each is the same. What is the name of each? A fact, a little thing, though the spelling is *fact*, and man has got so out of the way of keeping the pace of God that he prefers to keep the slower pace of what he calls fact. We say of certain brethren, "He is a man of facts, he is a matter-of-fact man." I do not want to see him, I should not like to see him. There

is a place not far from where I live where he might be put. I should not go to see him though ten and twenty sandwich men go before me every morning saying there may be seen at such and such waxworks a man of fact. O save me from his chilling, yea, his killing presence. There are no facts; there are what, for the sake of convenience, we call facts, but a fact is not worth attending to if it is taken in its mere nakedness. Fact must have atmosphere; there must be a sounding and moving in the air within whose action a fact stands. A gatepost may be a fact, but a tree is not; it changes, grows, beautifies, sleeps that it may awake, grows in beauty, in grace, in strength, and every year repeats and expands the parable of resurrection.

Of course men have to grow into these convictions and into these conceptions and perceptions of things. The man of prose thinks the poet a fool; the man of mere literal prose thinks the parabolist a creature to be smiled at and borne with, but on the whole not to be much relied on. Fiction is the true fact. We have been unjust to fiction. The fictionist sees the truth through a great and glorious and glowing cloud of inspired and ennobled fancy. He reads for us what we cannot read for ourselves. The astronomer knows this in some little way. When the astronomer tells me that the planet A is 14,947,316½ miles distant from planet B, I am obliged to believe him. I want to contradict him, but no man can contradict 14,947,316½ miles; the man is not born with mouth enough to hold so much contradiction.

What we want is personal testimony. "They went through the flood on foot." I want the Church to rise up in all its memberships and each member to say, "So did I: I have been in floods that threatened to overwhelm me, and just as my faith was giving way, the flood disappeared, and I walked through on dry land. I have done it. I was dead—yes; I am alive—true." How so? "A great movement for which there is no name." So many people are geographers, and so few are astronomers. There are people who even believe in geology, but they cannot rise to astronomy. Now it is the astronomic that rules the whole. You

are a little geologist, with a little hammer and a little bag, and you go out for specimens, and you go tap, tap, tapping all over the rocks, and you go home to show what you have gathered. The astronomer takes no hammer, Sir Robert Ball takes no little hammer or bag for specimens of the red sandstone; he deals with planets, constellations, gravitations, astronomic, cosmic periods and quantities. The greater includes the less. Astronomy is the religion of science; astronomy is the theology of geology. So many men think that they are astronomers when they are only agriculturists. They have a knowledge of the surface of the earth and what ought to be done in all the four seasons of the year, and within those points they are clever men, and men whose word is authoritative and right. But, young soul, always understand that agriculture is not astronomy.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the triune God, be with us all the rest of the way, and finally take us through the flood on foot. Amen.

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, may we by Thy mercy escape for an hour from all the dreary anxieties and miseries of time, and enter, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, into the innermost places of Thy sanctuary, and there find rest and renewed joy and rekindled hope. We bless Thee for all the upper regions, for all the heights we cannot touch, for all the numbers we cannot count; we accept thus the rebuke and the reproach of the Lord. Thou dost stain the pride of our glory, and crush our ambition, and, behold, Thou doest all this that through Jesus Christ Thy Son Thou mayest in the end make us men. We want to escape from the pit and the valley and the cloud, and stand on the great heights, and see the sunshine of Thy face. Surely Thou wilt not disappoint us, nor wilt Thou send us away with rebuke as an answer; Thou wilt be gracious unto our weakness, Thou wilt be tender with a great sympathy to all that is feeble and shortcoming; Thou wilt meet our prayers half-way, and complete them with Thy grace. We have done the things we ought not to have done, we have left undone the things that we ought to have done; we will rebuke ourselves, we will stand in the cold winds of self-accusation; we will not open our lips in self-defence. God be merciful to us sinners! We have run after the world, we have rolled iniquity under our tongue as a sweet morsel, we have hewn out to ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns that could hold not water. We will therefore come before Thee upon our knees in the deepest humiliation of spirit, knowing that if we confess our sins Thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We have come also to pray one for another: for this man beareth a heavy burden, and in that broken heart there is a great gash as of a cruel wound. Some are sitting in loneliness, and almost despair; others are withered in soul, and think it is no use living any longer. Some are full of joy, music, and high delight, and celebrate the time with trumpet and shawm and musical instrument. The Lord look upon us all in these various conditions, and according to the necessity of each heart do Thou give Thy blessing to each worshipper. There are wounds we cannot heal, there are tears we cannot dry, there are lonelinesses into which no company can ever come. Yet Thou dost now and then give

us some gleam of heaven, now and again we seem to see the white ones and to overhear the music of their song. We thank Thee on behalf of all who have had a new chance in life, for those who have been disappointed long and only yesterday began to see that something bright may yet be in reserve. We thank Thee for any breaking of the clouds; we bless Thee that our defence is in God; Thou wilt not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, and with every temptation Thou wilt make a way of escape. Turn our houses into homes, turn our families into sanctuaries in which the Most High shall dwell; sanctify our afflictions that they may add to our strength and complete our tenderness. When we are weak may we be strong, may the strong never despise the weak, may the weak kiss the hand that smites, and look up with a look that is silent music. Good Lord, Thou knowest what our hearts are aching for, what our desire is, what we dare not speak loudly even to ourselves. Thou knowest our downsitting, our uprising, our going-out, and our coming-in; Thou dost beset us behind and before, and lay Thine hand upon us. All this we have learned at the Cross; this is the message of the Eternal Son; by the Eternal Spirit we accept it, we would live it in daily experience, we would be living witnesses, living lights, that men, seeing us, may glorify our Father which is in heaven.

We leave our prayer before Thee; let it not fall back upon the earth like a dead bird; may it abide in the heavens and be the occasion of many a blessing in days to come. We say it because Jesus died and rose again. Amen.

CLXIV.

SACRAMENTAL THOUGHTS.

"*Before I suffer.*"—LUKE xxii. 15.

IT seems almost unjust to these words to speak them loudly. Oh that we had the power to whisper into the most distant ear without raising the voice at all! There are far-reaching whispers. The Holy Spirit may now take up our poor weakness and whisper to each listening soul this mournful but most thrilling text.

"Before I suffer." Let us think of the little, simple, yet tragic scene. "When the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him." How many apostles? Twelve. All true men? We shall see. A little speech was made, so full of pathos, so full of history:—"With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." How seldom it seems to be remembered that the Lord celebrated His death before He died! That is anticipation; that is out of order. Yes, it is out of man's disorderly order. "For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." How was it all exemplified? We never see the Master more masterly than just now in the face of this little feast. "He . . . He . . . I . . . I . . ." A long way after—"you . . . you." "And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And He took bread"—any piece of bread that was on the table—"and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup"—this supper cup, this little domestic function—"this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you." We cannot get rid of the blood-shedding, because it was Jesus Himself who told us about the blood, and His own blood, and why it was shed, and for whom it was shed. That is the simple scene.

Let us notice, first, that it was all of Christ's own suggestion. The disciples suggested nothing—they were wise. Who would offer suggestions to the Eternal? It was Christ that said, Let us make a bigger and greater passover than the one that has been celebrated outside, let us have an inner and spiritual passover, let us get at the reality and the true music of the passover historic, let us dwell in the secret places of the tabernacles of the Most High. Everything is of Christ's suggestion, if we could but hold ourselves and not deafen ourselves with our own noises. The morning is a sacrament, and the evening star, and all growing things, and all things beautiful and living. In reading the New Testament

always separate the words of Jesus from every other man's words; take off all that is added to the eloquence of the Saviour, and let that eloquence stand forth and sound forth in the infinite grandeur of its absolute simplicity. The great and horrible crimes we have committed against the Christ by the accumulation of favourite words, and the cutting of phrases which only a few here and there can understand! If we would let Jesus speak more in His own Church there would be a great feeding and nourishing of the soul, there would be a great increase of strength, and strength so derived would express itself in proper and effective language. There is no hint that what we call a Sacrament was being established. Jesus Christ established no sacraments. The Church in one of her aspects has established seven, and most of the Churches accept two; and Jesus established neither. There is nothing of the kind in the great, holy, mystic, spiritual Church of the living Christ. I get rid of sacramentarianism by getting rid of the sacraments. My Lord established nothing of this mechanical, ceremonial, functional kind. Any piece of bread that you can find on your mother's table may be turned into the Lord's body. Why do you not take it as such? You do not want any man to come and play antics over it. The Christianity of Christ is not a necromancy. If your mother would hand you some milk or water, you might take it as red wine, blood-red, not the artist's colour, but the colour that swims into the weeping eyes of those who take the gift as God's feast. All this functional, mechanical arrangement and sacrament is so far away from the love-scene, the love-feast of the old, old time. Surely the earliest churches knew this, for, for more than 700 years, the Christian Church had no Lord's Supper; in a sense it is a modern invention; but the taking of the body and the drinking of the blood is as old as Christ Himself, and He brought it up from eternity. The less our poor fingers have to do with these elements and arrangements the better, and if the last forgiven sinner could come amongst us and say with shaken soul yet rejoicing heart, "This is the Lord's body," I would take it from his hands, because of his being pardoned as it were but yesterday, yea, a moment ago, by the Lord Himself, whose

immediate visage he had seen with the eyes of love. O how they do err, with such strange obliquity amounting almost to criminality, who have made this dear table now standing before us into something of a priestly kind! I love the white cloth. It has a symbolic meaning, and I love the redness of the cup, because it does suggest the redness of blood; the bread is the staff of life—O give it to me, and let me eat it as my Lord's body! This was not an after-thought; this is not an anecdote in a history of surprises: the tree out of which the sacramental board was cut was growing before the forests were planted. This is the voice of eternity; this is the vision of things ineffable.

Then notice that all this was done in anticipation of the death. I repeat, this is not the general order. It was, however, Christ's order, and that is enough for us. Have we seen the picture in its vivid and impressive reality? Here is a Man celebrating his own death, doing something on the way to the final excruciating agony. Christ established a great preventive ministry, a great ministry that outran events and waited for them. He gave His followers bread lest they should faint by the way. He did not find them fainting, He prevented them from reeling in weakness. To us it would have seemed mechanically in order, if Jesus, after rising from the dead, had established what we call the Lord's Supper. He was always surprising us, always He was doing things before the time, always He set aside our little mechanical series and processions and progressions, and did things when we least expected them. He flashed upon the world at midnight. Let me think well over this fact—for I am now, in imagination, in process of time, following the events of my Lord's wondrous ministry, and I am staggered when I find Him doing what never entered into my imagination—that any man could give his body away whilst he yet lived, drawing his arterial blood and making us drink with joy whilst yet his blood was unshed. We must get into these pre-histories, away into the silences that were never broken by language; then we shall be in the secret places of the tabernacles of the Most

High, then we shall have great converse, full of music and unutterable sweetness, with the very heart of our Christ. Take the Sacrament—as we now foolishly call it—take the Lord's Supper morning, noon, and night, and every hour between. Whenever you draw a breath, draw it in remembrance of Christ; whenever you lift an eye to the great heights where the stars tremble and burn, do it in the name and for the sake of Christ as a grand covenant-making act. Let the eyes seek the Maker of the stars, not the little twinkles and flashes of fire. Thus we shall live and move and have our being in God. Talk about religious observance, and Lord's days, and churches and chapels, and bread and wine, and psalm-book and high anthem—always live in that atmosphere, praying without ceasing; be always on the wing or ready for it; so do the Lord's birds fly, and He finds them nesting beyond the reach of the thief. We have made religion a little part of our life, we say, "This is Sunday." Every day is now Sunday. We say, "We go to church to-day." Why, we should go to church every day, every moment: the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, and every drop of water in the sea is a note in some unuttered anthem. We must be greater, larger, sweeter, more spiritualised in our religion. Of course there are some who are not on a level with others. We must remember that some are in the nursery; some are still engaged with religious toys. Many require external and mechanical helps and encouragement. By all means let them be supplied with what they really need. Always, you who make the allowance, teach them that what is to come is better than what has come, that the best things are always coming, and when we see our first vision of the kingdom of God behind the clouds it will only be the first vision; and the first vision means a growing series. If you have a Lord's Supper, you may be disappointed often; if you need that some one should spread the table and find the wine and the bread, you are a long way from the kingdom of God. Yet there is a beauty, a really tender and solid beauty, in souls coming together in holy companionship and communion to take the bread and the wine together. If we really enter into the music of that idea, it is full of cheering

encouragement and mutual strengthening. Surely, I often take the Lord's Supper alone; nay, there are two of us, for the Lord says the blessing, the Lord conducts the eucharistic religious function, and leaves me nothing to do, blessed be His love, but eat His body and grow strong in His blood. If we could work along some such lines as those we should be truly religious, truly spiritual, and we should have no need to write controversial pamphlets about this section of the Church and that section of the Church, and blaspheme the Cross by passing resolutions about it. May we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Now my Lord speaks a word which is seldom quoted, and which ought to rule the administration of the whole feast, when we come together in one place for one purpose. What said He? "Take this, and divide it among yourselves." Was He ever so simple, was He ever so little mechanical? This was a mutual feast, a mutual covenant-making. Take this cup, take this bread, and divide it among yourselves, and you will find, what I showed you a little while ago, that you can never give the bread all away, and you can never empty the chalice. Why, does my Lord wish me to repeat His miracle of the distribution that I marvelled at so much? Yes, He says to ministers, preachers, teachers, leaders, young folks and old, Each of you take a crumb; it is only a crumb to look at, it is a feast to live on. "Divide it among yourselves." But wilt Thou not send me to give this bread to this people? No. Wilt Thou not send forth men robed in red and white and black and divers colours, as if they only could do it? No, is the sweet reply; you hand it to one another; divide it among yourselves, it is all for you; and remember that division is multiplication, that to part with these gifts is to increase them, and to seal and assure your personal inheritance. This is what my Lord is always saying, "Divide it among yourselves." If you have a truth, if you have a vision, if you have a new way of looking at things, divide it among yourselves, do not keep anything hidden under some secret cover of your own. If you have a truth, a new truth, a larger truth, a brighter

truth, call all within reach together, and divide it among yourselves; it will be no less yours that you have given it to others: there is a giving that comes back again by multiplication and most holy and fruitful increase.

Such simple things the Lord gave us. He said in reality, If you want to outdress Solomon cover yourselves with lilies—no, take one white-faced lily, and Solomon will be ashamed of his finery, if it be a question of competition, rivalry, and social envy. And now He says, the supper being ended, "This is My body, and My blood." There are people who wish to understand it. It never can be understood; no man can enter the kingdom of heaven by understanding it. He may think he has some initial notion of the meaning, and he will feel a strange warming of the heart, quite a glow in the innermost places of the soul, but he can never tell it in words; and yet some people have taken brush and paint and colour and have written what they believe, they have detailed their faith into a catalogue. Believest thou? The act is one, thrilling, consummating, self-attesting. God answers by fire.

Jesus made a simple memorial function of this passover in the inner places. He said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." That was simplicity, that was pathos, that was the Lord in very deed. "Do this," or, "This do in remembrance of Me." Well, we cannot help it, we would not help it if we could. If He had said do this as a doctrine, or even do this as a duty; if He had said do this under some circumscriptions and regulations, and wait for the man who has the inkhorn who alone can write these instructions for you, we should have been obstinate. But when He said, "Do this in remembrance of Me," He looked so sweet, there was such an ineffable tenderness in His voice, that we never thought of anything but obedience.

On the first Lord's Day in the month we have the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as it is called, and I invite everybody to it—the worse the better, if the heart really wants to seek God and confess Him, no matter in what crudeness of language. Those

of you who are strangers, friendly strangers, visitors, who would like to remain, simply send by the hands of any of the deacons or members of the staff your name, and the town you come from, for I like to keep a little confidential record of the Church of the absent. O what thousands have passed before this table!

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the triune God, abide with us, until we see our Pilot face to face. Amen.

ORDER OF SERVICE, 6TH OCTOBER, 1901.

Voluntary ... ... "Andante" ... ... *Hesse*

Anthem 41 ... ... "He that shall endure" (*Elijah*) *Mendelssohn*

The Lord's Prayer.—*Hawkins.*

Hymn 516 ... ... "Welcome, sweet day of rest."

1st Lesson. Isaiah i. 16-20.

Chant 40 ... ... Psalm xxxiii. ... ... *Crotch*

2nd Lesson. Rom. xi. 33-36.

Anthem ... "O come, let us worship" (*95th Psalm*) *Mendelssohn*

O come, let us worship and kneel before the Lord our Maker, and bow down to Him. He is our God, and we are the flock of His pasture, the people of His hand.

Solo: Mr WILLIAM A. SHEEN.

Prayer.

Hymn 187 ... "How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds."

Sermon.

Offertory and Solo:

"Lord, keep me" ... ... *Zardo*

Mr. EDGAR ARCHER.

Hymn 484 ... ... "O Bread to pilgrims given."

Benediction and Threefold Amen.—*Gounod.*

Voluntary ... ... "Communion" ... ... *Salomé*

Celebration of the Lord's Supper.

PASTORAL WORDS.

"*He was wounded for our transgressions.*"

THE tragedy of the Cross makes an infinite impression; it dwells within us like a memory that will hardly condescend to accept the embodiment of words; it looks upon us when we are blind with tears; it says something to us when we exclaim, "What shall we do to be saved?" It is not to be mechanically written about, or formally preached, or set forth by dainty choice of dainty words. There is a region where words are useless, where images are hardly available, where choicest metaphor feels itself a trespasser. There are regions which we can only look at, and at whose closed doors we can only wait until it pleaseth the indwelling Spirit to set them ajar a little, that through the hospitable rent we may hear somewhat of the nature of explanatory or consolatory music.

Men see the Cross in its saving aspect probably only once, probably in one flashing moment, but they never forget the spectacle; it recurs when they need it, and that vision leaves the whole life whiter than snow, whiter than wool, creates in the life a hunger and a thirst after things divine and heavenly, and makes the man a new creature, so that heaven's own stars are but baubles after having seen a universe compared with which they are dim specks of colour. All proportions, all distances, all values are changed, changed as in the twinkling of an eye. We are often cursed by our intelligence. We are often impoverished, in a religious sense, by our grammatical cleverness. God is not a God of etymology and syntax; else salvation would be of grammar, not of grace; of clever interpretation, not of absolute, implicit, filial acceptance and obedience.

Have we had the vision? Was there a day when all heaven shone with new light, and all earth became transformed with ineffable beauty? Was there a day when we felt love towards all men and could have saved all men that very day, and have brought them into heaven at once—a great missionary experience, a great evangelistic realisation of the value of men? That was the day when the Son of Man found that which was lost, and brought it home rejoicing. Never let that day drop out of your memory.

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, may we find in our unbelief the cause and root of all our failures. Thy kingdom is a kingdom of faith; no man entereth into Thy kingdom but by the door of belief; and unless we have faith we cannot be the disciples of Jesus Christ. Oh that Thy Church might know this and feel it in her heart; then would she be as a wise bride of the divine Bridegroom. She seeks for her failures everywhere but in herself; she does not believe; she thinks she believes, but she does not; she believes a few old remnants and rags of things, but with the hand of faith she has laid hold of nothing. Oh that our faith might be increased, that it might be made a divine power within us, a power from which nothing is withheld. Lord, grant that this may be our experience; if we had more faith we should have more life; if we had more life we should have more faith; they are wrought and interwrought; it is a great mystery, but we speak concerning Christ and His Church. The Lord hear us when we pray for ourselves that we may be forgiven, pitied in heaven, forborne in the skies. Oh that we might learn the power of faith, the omnipotence of faith, the all-conquering power and force of faith. Hear us when we pray for those for whom we ought to pray by every reason that can constrain and rule human action. The Lord hear us when we pray for pardon, when we ask for the forgiveness of our sins; with men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. Let the Lord hear us and be very gracious unto us, and multiply His lovingkindnesses towards us; then shall we be great and strong, mighty to proclaim Thy truth, and irresistible in its defence and exposition. We pray this in the name of Jesus, without whom prayer is impossible. Amen.

CLXV.

REASONS OF FAILURE.

"*Because of your unbelief.*"—MATT. xvii. 20.

ET us read the whole verse:—"And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." This is too great a text. The text itself is impossible to us, yet its beauty, its meaning, its inner poetry is a reality. We have lived under the weather, we have lived under the sky instead of living above it. The kingdom of God is a kingdom of faith, not a kingdom of opinions, not a seed-ground of dogmas, but a kingdom of the upper life and the better,—the life of faith, the life above life, the life that has already laid hold upon immortality. We believe this—on paper; we believe theoretically; we do not believe it in reality, or there would be no failures amongst us; we could handle one devil as securely and surely as we could handle another, and all devils are alike to face. The world is full of devils, evil spirits, possessions of all kinds; we cannot stir except through devildom. If we knew this and made a daily fact of it, we should prosper. We do not occasionally meet evil spirits; they are about us, round about us, in us, above us. If the possession of a devil were some kind of smallpox, we should get vaccinated for it, we should be quite ready to accept once for all some kind of cure. It is this daily watching, this continual vigilance, that is such a distress to us. If we could believe the thing once for all, we would not object to it; if we could by going to church once for all get over the whole difficulty, we would not mind going. It is not so; it is a continual sobriety, and consequent vigilance. Therefore it is a daily task, a common

lot, a doing only that we may learn how to do. This is the gravity and this is the pain of it all.

Face the facts. "Why have I failed?" Because of your unbelief. "But I seem to believe a good deal." You do not; you believe nothing. "Well, but, I profess to be a Christian." You ought not, you have no business in God's sanctuary except you come to it under the conviction that you have no business to be there; then you are in a hopeful state. If you say, "I have no right to be in Christ's house, I am from head to foot tainted with an evil malady—nay, I represent and am that evil malady itself; now may I go?" we say yes, come and welcome. But if you come of right, if you come six feet high, if you come with the consciousness that God can do nothing for you, that Christ has no message to you, then you come in the wrong spirit, and without the spirit of Christ we cannot receive the blessing of Christ. Do you understand what I mean? I want you to come, but I want you to come on the right ground, on the right basis; not that you have a right to be here, but that the doors are mercy, and that every step you take, you take because mercy surrounds you and welcomes you and will do for you all that is necessary in the way of preparation for the reception and realisation of Christ's one grand redemption. Never misread facts; get at the bottom of things; do not rest halfway; never read facts superficially; whatever they mean get hold of their meaning, their innermost, their most tremendous meaning. This is the way to get the secret of progress, the secret of success, and the secret of salvation. You must have it in your hearts, and you cannot get it there until you feel that you do not deserve it, but that having realised your undeservingness you have prepared your souls to receive the great mercy and the holy kingdom of God.

The text covers all failures. "Because of your unbelief." Jesus had but one explanation. You do not get on in life because of your unbelief. The reason you fail in business is because of your unbelief; the reason why you wither in intellect is because of your unbelief. You do not know

how deeply faith goes, you cannot tell what a penetrating power it has and how it takes up all things along with it, and secures them all in one multifold and compendious blessing. Faith is not sentiment, but power. If I could reduce the Church one half I would rather have it a reduced Church, if I could by that means have it an instructed and intelligent Church. Faith is not sentiment; it is not a sigh, it is not even an aspiration, it is power. If thou hadst faith as a grain of mustard seed thou wouldst say to this mountain, "Get out of the way!" and it would be abashed and flee. It is not so in common life. No, it is not so in common life, but we have to rise to that height, we have to lay hold of that power. Until we have laid hold of that power we have laid hold of nothing. I should therefore drive out of the Church many who are in it, and bring into the Church many who are out of it. This process would take the form of weeding and drafting and planting and grafting in many that do believe and do not know it. That is a mystery. Yes, that is a mystery, and a great mystery. The mystery is that you have been believing the wrong thing, you have been working at the wrong end, and you have been miscalculating the whole purpose of the kingdom of God, which is power—power to live, power to think, power to overcome temptation, power to drive out of the life everything that sucks out of it the very pith of existence. You must know that without power you die. And faith is not only power, faith is beneficent power. There is nothing in mere power; you must not say that I am and she is a very powerful agent because he or she can do this or that. The mere doing of it is nothing. You must have an object, you must be judged by your motive, you must have a beneficent power. What is a beneficent power? The power to do good, the power to cast out devils, the power to hearten people, the power to bring the cheer of heaven's own bright summer kingdom to bear upon their lives. That is what power is. Power of the beneficent sort would make a new world. Beneficent power never goes about the streets seeking what it can gain for itself; beneficent power parades the road in order to take out of that road everything that can hinder life,

everything that can keep back the light, everything that can prevent the soul growing, expanding, blossoming in God.

If faith is beneficent power, then the want of faith inflicts serious injury on society. It is not what you are doing, but it is what you might be doing, that is the great and solemn question, that is continually before the serious mind of the serious man. If I have not faith it is not I who lose only, it is the other man. If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed you would take the devil out of another man, shake him over the bottomless pit, and let him fall into the eternal fire. So that you are doing harm at both ends; you are doing harm through not having faith, and you are doing harm to others who want that faith to be turned upon them as a great beneficent and delivering power. If I had the courage, the faith, of my convictions, I should do a great deal more good in society than I am doing to-day. That is true of every Christian man. The mischief—O the sad, terrible, heartrending misery of it!—is that we think we have faith when we have not, that we think we believe when we do not believe. If you believed, you would either go mad or you would be divine. That is the case as it touches upon the great extremes of life. You could not believe in a hell, and sit there, arms folded, in a critical mood, and thanking God that you have no prospect of going there, but quite willing that all the rest should go. Ah me, if you believed your own doctrines, really and truly believed them, did not merely write them upon paper and register them in some legal office; if you believed, you must either go out and save the world, or you must go mad because of your impotence in that direction.

Picture the scene. "Lord, I came to Thy disciples that they should cure my son, and they could not." There is the Church; these ten or twelve men are the Church of Christ, and they represent a certain degree of influence; they can go up to a certain point, but beyond that they feel miserable. "And they could not." When the poor man said that, he withered them away; they were like so many fig-trees that had nothing but leaves upon their bare

branches. "I brought him to Thy disciples, and—O the misery of it!—I thought as Thou wast here perhaps these men, having touched Thy garment, might do something for my boy, and I report to Thee that these men could not do this." And they withered away, or they would have withered away, but they had grace enough left to inquire why they could not do it, and that was their salvation. "Why could not we cast him out?" "Because of your unbelief." You would be mighty men if you had faith; the framework is all right, you look to be a numerical church, but if I were to judge you by look, it would be a withering fire. The question is, Why are we not converting the world? There is but one answer, always the same, "Because of your unbelief." You do not believe the things you repeat every Sunday, not a word of them. You say, "Lord, have mercy upon me," and you do not want it, you are not consciously needing that particular exercise of mercy, and prayer either hardens the soul or it gives it fuller liberty and greater expansion. You cannot say, "Lord, have mercy upon me" day after day, week after week, and remain just the same; your prayer becomes a commonplace as much as any other act of your life. Who, then, can be saved? None. We had better know that. Far too many people are saved in a nominal, superficial, and vexatious sense. But were one man left who knew in his soul that he did believe, and believed it all, and believed it so that other things were shut out of sight, that man would take the kingdom of heaven by violence, and he would be a great army, few but strong, strong though few, a great army at the gate of heaven. Jesus Christ never represented faith as merely intellectual. We have not yet got into the right definition; somehow or other we are wrong in our definitions, and we stand outside of them. Jesus Christ never made faith an intellectual act, pure and simple; or then salvation would be of works, it would only be the clever men that would be saved—"I," the proud man might say, "I am saved because I see it, I see it intellectually; I see the plan of salvation just as clearly as I see one of the propositions of Euclid, and I can work it out, and sign the usual signature, and hand back the slate to the Deity,

and say, There, I have signed it—Q.E.D.; that is what Thou didst give me to do; as for this poor man here, well, he will never be saved, because he cannot understand the terms of the proposition, and he is at sea altogether; he cannot be saved; I am saved through sheer intellectual power." So says the wickedly proud man. Whereas in heaven's court the decision may be reversed, and we may come upon this, that the poor man who knows nothing about terms and propositions, but just throws himself upon the mighty arms of Jesus, he will be saved when others are cast out and unknown. This is a terrible proposition, this is a hard saying. It is the saying of this Book, the Bible, the Holy Scripture, and I abide by the statements of this Book, the root doctrines of this one volume, and there I find that faith conquers all, rules the whole kingdom, and will prosper and succeed and fructify into blessed, beneficent fruits when all your intellectual framework has melted away and is no longer to be seen, for it is not only of works, but of the meanest kind of works, works with which you have nothing to do, it came to you without your seeking, and will wither away because of your mere wordy, tumultuous pride.

You are never a man in the full sense until you have faith. Faith is manhood as well as a gospel. Faith is the secret of commerce as well as the secret of eternity. Unless you have faith you cannot be really at your best estate. That is a proposition which must be thought out and thought out carefully, so that you can lay hold upon it and live by it. You were meant to believe that all that ever came before Christ were thieves and robbers; they had not got the right idea of manhood. Manhood is faith; faith is manhood, and unless you have faith you cannot come to the full estate of manhood as God meant you to come to it. You can be a man, you say, without having Christian faith, and I say it is impossible; I go further, and I say you cannot have manhood in any of its forms without having faith; I mean to say that you cannot have scholarship without having faith, you cannot have any kind of prosperity and real progress in life without having faith. It is true theologically because it is true universally, and unless you get hold of truths

that are universal you cannot get hold of any truth that is in particular a theology, a divinity, a system of philosophy; they all come and go together. Faith is one grand sovereign act.

But we do not always require this faith. Perhaps not. What then shall we do with it when we do not want it? I say that we must cultivate faith that we may be ready for all emergencies. These people did not know that this man was at the foot of the mountain. They should cultivate faith when they think they do not need faith; they should accept the great fact and reality that they must be ready when the time comes, when their faith will be called upon. Hence we have many a man who is apparently doing nothing: whereas he may in reality be doing much, he may be cultivating his faith against the time that he needs it. He says, I have an off-day to-day, I do not know what God is going to do with me; He has given me release for one day, and therefore I shall spend that in gathering in, in storing the electric fluid, in gathering all the expressions and all the possibilities of the highest religious life. That is a new view of things. Certainly, that is a new view; we are in holiday that we may gather and store and become prepared for great occasions. You have no trial of your faith to-day. No, very well, then store what you can for to-morrow: thou knowest not what a day may bring forth; store thy strength, keep hold of the plough, for thou shalt one day have need of every particle of faith you have, and when that day comes show that you have not been living in vain in the days that are gone.

A church without faith is a church without miracles. There are many such churches; they have given up miracles because they misunderstand them. What is a miracle? Perhaps I may find that you are wrong in your conception of a miracle. Now Jesus Christ lays down the doctrine that if we have faith as a grain of mustard seed we shall say to mountains, Begone! and they will go. A church ought to have miracles; you do not really increase in wisdom in sweeping the miracles of our Lord out of the way. It is because you have a false conception of miracles. Miracles

were not miracles to Christ; they were commonplaces. He lived above them, we live below them, and there is all the difference in the world between having to struggle up to a miracle and descending upon it clothed with the almighty power; then a miracle becomes a commonplace. Miracles would become commonplaces with us if we had faith that was really and truly alive and active. We have got rid of miracles because we have got rid of faith. We say that we have faith, and have it not; we have the outline, but a man may have the outline of power or the name of power without having the reality—having the form of godliness without the power thereof.

Now this text gives us the great inquiry and the great answer. This text applies to all failures. They say that if we had faith the sea would be no difficulty to us, we would lie on it and roll in it as a child lies in the cradle and slumbers away its little hour of sleep. They say that the secret forces of nature—if we were kinder to them, if we received them with a spirit of faith—put it in what form of language we may—if we were more *en rapport* with the great forces of nature we should fear them not, they would be as one of us, and we would walk into them and through them, and all the while feel that we were really and truly in the sanctuary of God. Why is not the world converted? Because of your unbelief. If there were one true Christian in the world, a right Christian, a steady, real, thoroughgoing Christian, he would change the face of the world. There are many nominal Christians, many professing Christians. They are good people as far as they go, but they do not go far enough. We want a full faith, an intelligent faith, a complete and ruling faith. Why is not your gold consecrated? Because of your unbelief. You dare not trust it out of your sight, you dare not put it in the hands that were pierced for you. If you could do that, you would be rich men, but you cannot do it by planning to do it; that is to say, you cannot make an investment of your faith. If you put your money into Christ's hands and say, "Now we will see what becomes of it," nothing will become of it, but if you do it because you love to do it, and never think about the whole

transaction as a commercial dealing, then you will receive the full recompense of reward. Why is not the glory of the Lord shining forth east, west, north, south? Because of your unbelief. You have several things laid upon your faith, your faith is down, down, and on it there is piled your life, your business, your domestic cares, your anxieties, and you cannot expect your faith to cast off all these, and be as fresh as if it were the ruling power and motive of your life. It cannot be done. Faith must be at the top, must rule all things, must shape your life, must inspire your song, and turn your whole pilgrimage into the walk and conversation of the living Christ.

Why is not the Church the highest power in the world? Because of your unbelief. You are always tearing the Bible to pieces, you are always revising it and re-revising it, until you are quite sure that there is nothing in it that a literalist cannot understand. A literalist can never understand God. A man who is a literalist, and says the Bible is literature, and as literature it should be understood, is not in the same region with God. He must have a religion that is full of mystery and full of grandeur; he must have a religion that has a sky like our own. What use do we make of the sky? We could make no use of the earth but for the sky, and we must have a mysterious sky, or we cannot have a fruit-bearing earth; we must have the light of the sun, or we cannot have the sunlight playing around our feet as a familiar friend. The sun is remote, solemn, unapproachable, retiring as we approach it; but the sunlight is here, is now playing on the sea, playing on the fields, playing about our feet, a gentle light, a majestic solitude. So it is with religion. Our God is away, in some aspects of His being far away, but in the face of Jesus Christ He is amongst us, He is God with us, He is the Holy One, and if we do not get hold of this great solemn truth we shall flounder in our perplexity, and in that soil our character will come to nothing but leaves—abundant but fruitless leaves. Oh, I feel this, that we must be nearer to Jesus, we must be nearer to the Giver of faith. He never failed. When the disciples stood back the Master stood in front, and He said simply,

"Bring him to Me." He did not say, "Let Me try, I will endeavour to do what I can; I do not promise that I will succeed." He said, "Bring him to Me," and as he was coming He "rebuked the devil." That word "rebuked" is a great word, it is a word of defiance, a word of face-to-face and hand-to-hand conflict. "Rebuked the devil," smote him, defied him; and the Church must do this, or she is a poor whining and miserable traitoress. The Church must go forward; the Church must believe more boldly. The Church has lost her old strident, terrible, tremendous, gracious tones; she has lost her courtesy, her highest honour, she has succumbed to the enemy. O Church of the living God, be stirred, have something to preach, and preach it simply, strongly—preach it well. Be thou like the heroic Paul; if thou hast a truth to utter, speak it boldly, speak it all.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the triune God, abide with us, until we see the light and enjoy the rest of heaven. Amen.

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, when Thy Jerusalem is at peace the whole earth shall share the calm. We would be at peace with God, and therefore at peace with one another. We would magnify Thy grace, we would cry aloud and call for the exercise of Thy mercy, that we may this day be forgiven and pardoned and set at rest. We bless Thee for Thy house, it is indeed a green place in the wilderness, it is the house of quiet, it is the place where our souls may take rest. Thou hast set Thy tabernacle amongst men; our houses lean against Thine; and because the tabernacle of God is with men upon the earth, so shall they at last have peace and quiet and a great inheritance. Teach us, we humbly pray Thee, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, that all things depend upon Thy will, and that if we obey Thy will we shall surely enter into Thy peace. Forbid that we should have any will of our own; may we say, Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven; may we conclude and complete every prayer with the cry, Nevertheless, not our will, but Thine be done; then shall our prayer be answered, and God shall be glorified and His Church shall be at rest. We bless Thee for the harvest day, we thank Thee for the time when we draw the fruits of the earth together and pray over them as over God's gifts, and say, Blessed be the giver and His great benison. Behold, Thine hand is stretched towards us for our good; not in judgment but in mercy dost Thou rule the children of men. Help us, we beseech Thee, to take the fruits of the earth with a loving heart, with thankful tongues, and may we praise the Lord for all His gifts, for all His tender mercies and lovingkindnesses. The Lord hear us when we pray for the forgiveness of our sins. We pray this prayer at the foot of the Cross; other place there is none where we can pray with assurance of a full answer. We pray for Thy pardon; say unto each of us, Son of David, thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee. Then indeed shall we have peace, and a great tranquility shall steal into our hearts. The Lord's favours be showered upon us in the future as in the past, and may we show ourselves to be not ungrateful, but rather grateful and appreciative, by taking Thy gifts and handing them on to those who have less than we have. Lord, hear us; let the King hear us when we call, let His mercy be exceeding towards us in plenteousness, and may we see the good hand of God in all things. Prosper us and keep us, and see that we stray not from Thy side; for he who strays dies. Amen.

CLXVI.

THROUGH THE MATERIAL TO THE SPIRITUAL.

"*But the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.*"
—ISAIAH xvii. 11.

T will not appear to be so. Appearance, indeed, will be on the other side. But we are to judge by the harvest, by the end, and not by the appearances. Sometimes it would seem as if the devil reigned. He has everything his own way; he imagines evil, and brings his device to pass; and we say, "Why should we trouble about God, and of what good is it to pray? He does not trouble us, He does not answer, He does not care for us." But the Lord has never concealed from us the great fact that He judges everything by the end; He ripens evil, as well as good. God can only get at some people through the material; they have wasted the spiritual. He can make no impression upon them along the spiritual line; they have lost all their sensitiveness, they are past feeling, their conscience is seared as with a hot iron, and the withdrawal of His spiritual mercies would have no effect upon them. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord." We cannot but wonder what some people will come to. We may indeed profit very much by turning the inquiry upon our own souls, and asking what shall be the end of it all so far as we are concerned. There are whole tracts of time in which we are not conscious of our need of God. Then there are other days when we feel that He made the light, that He sends every beam of sunshine upon us, and when, but for His mercy, there would not be an ear of corn in the harvest field. So we are thrown about from one side to the other, we are plagued and dis-

tressed; we see all those who are doing all they can to upset the divine kingdom prospering, having plenteousness of bread and fulness of water; and we see those who are doing what little they can to prosper the heavenly kingdom in distress and in sadness, having great losses and great trials; and it behoves us, therefore, to stand still and inquire about these things.

God must come to us. He will come to us through the way of pain or loss or sorrow; He will take a long time to come, but He will come. It takes years to make some men think; it takes years to bring down the high looks of the haughty and to bring to nothing the devices that are multiplied against the Lord; but they will all come down. I tremble when I think of some young people who have all that heart could wish, and ostentatiously reject the Lord. They say, "No, we have fields enough and estates enough and wine enough, and others may pray who want to pray, but we do not want to pray; if there is a God, we do not know Him; if there is a God, we are not afraid to despise them." It is very sad, but so it is in some cases not rare. We who live only in pious circles and environments do not know what is going on within other environments. If we ourselves pray and think and dwell much in God, we suppose that all the rest of the world are as we are. That is the mischief. There are rich men, there are men who never knew what a day's poverty was; there are men who have only seen the sunny side of life: what can we expect from them? But God takes the long course, the tortuous, sinuous line, but He brings them to their knees at last. What I want to impress upon the young mind is this: Do not judge by a moment of sunshine; the law has been made clear, it cannot alter:—"It shall be well with the righteous, and it shall be ill with the wicked." The Lord causes the harvest to bud and to bring forth all manner of sweet miracles, and then at the last He looks at it in rebuke and withers it from the face of the earth, withers it whilst we are gathering it; we thrust in our sickle, and hew down sheaves of darkness and of poison.

The Lord can only get at some men by material

losses and by personal pains and sorrows. Pity it is —oh, so pitiful—that to get at the man He must take away the child. Why, the man has set his whole heart upon that child: he was to be the greatest of men, she was to be the sweetest of women; and, lo, at noonday there was a great darkness, and in the time of triumph and of feasting there was a scene of bereavement and desolation, Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted, because they are not. Have you ever thought of the moral bearing of sorrow, bereavement, deprivation? The Lord gets at some other men by wasting their property. They have laid up great stores for themselves, they say, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry; thou hast much goods laid up for many years; why, thou canst spend the remainder of thy life in eating and drinking; thou hast plenty upon plenty, mountain upon mountain of riches and resources of all kinds." And a Voice says to him, "Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall these things be?"

Observe the reasonableness of this. Who is it that is offended? Who is it that is forgotten? The Giver, the Father, the Servant of all. What can happen but death? We cannot be living within a scheme of things which we did not set up, and we cannot adapt that scheme to our ways and our wishes without coming upon the Maker, the Contriver of it all. We are born into a scheme of things; we are not sent into the world to reconstruct it; great laws were here before we were; we found them out, discovered them, burnt our fingers in going too near them, and therefore we cannot ignore these laws without coming upon penalty, suffering, rebuke. Being sent into a scheme of things, our wisdom is in finding out how it begins, proceeds, how it develops, how it grows, and our great business in life is to lie alongside of these forces, and not to oppose them, but to obey them, and thus discover and glorify the will of God.

If we could in our little time reconstruct the universe and all its arrangements, that might be a course which would recommend itself to us for a little time at least,

but seeing that thou canst not make one hair black or white, seeing that thou canst not add a year to thine age, a cubit to thy stature, how much better is it to inquire into the operation of these laws, into the meaning of these mysteries, and to connect yourselves with all these works, that you may receive the proper reward of diligence, the proper harvest of obedience. There is no licentious liberty in the universe. Liberty is guarded, liberty moves within a certain circle, liberty represents a given and unchangeable sphere of divine action. There is very little liberty in the world; we think there is a great deal, but there is not; we think we can do as we like, and we find we cannot do so; on every side there are prisons, chains, limitations, rewards, punishments: conduct is beset and surrounded by divine enactments. That being the case, we should diligently inquire what these laws are and not undertake to alter them, but undertake to accept them and obey them, assured of this, that obedience means peace, and disobedience means wrath, conflict, and contention with a divine Opponent.

How reasonable this is, how according to fact! That is how the whole scheme of life is laid out before us. Can a watch break its mainspring, and go on just as if nothing had happened? and is it possible for the clay to mould itself? Is there not an Intelligent Agent, is there not behind it a man who knows about things and instruments and appliances and proportions? Ought we not to seek out that Intelligent Agent and make our peace with him? That would seem the natural course to take; it would seem to be right that we should do so. And yet this is all the Gospel asks us to do. The Gospel comes with a great scheme of salvation, a great scheme of redemption, and sets that down in the midst of us, and says, By your relation to that scheme will your destiny be determined; he that falls upon this stone shall be broken; on whomsoever this stone shall fall it will grind him to powder. That is said, that is the law; if that is so, why try to evade it, why trifle with it, why not fall in with the scheme of God's own sweet love? and why not fall in with it now, and why not accept it this very moment? why not cry to God just now, that He would accept the heart in all its wretchedness and

misery and helplessness and give it the healing which comes from heaven? Your life must be founded upon one of two things: all life is founded upon infatuation or upon reason. How is our life to be grounded? Where are we to receive the law and how are we to obey it? Upon infatuation; that is to say, upon claims of our own, upon inventions and theories, and speculations that have no authority human or divine, or upon reason, experience, something that leads us inward, onward, upward? We cannot see far along that road, but we can see the beginning of it; that is enough. You cannot see far, but you can see a yard or two, or a day's march all at once; that is enough. You cannot see to-morrow, you cannot see an hour ahead. Unless you have the guiding spirit of the living God you can see nothing but darkness. Very well, that being the case, let us go into reason, let us follow reason, let us walk a step at a time; let us understand that God means well by us, and that though we cannot see far we can see far enough to enable us to trust Him for the next step. That would be a sweet law of life, that would be a gracious liberty. I know not what is going to befall me, but if I have fallen into the hands of God, all will be well. But your time is nearing its end. So be it; God ends one life that He may begin another; He leads us into immortality; He grows a spirit little by little until it is prepared to take on its house which is from heaven.

On the ground, therefore, of mere reason, I hold that the Christian argument is a sound argument. It answers more questions than any other scheme of life; it lulls more anxieties, it brings more consolations, it goes further than any scheme of things can go into the great unseen and grand immeasurable. I ask you, therefore, to ground yourselves upon God's will, and take of life as it comes, with all simplicity of love and completeness of obedience and all-believing faith. If you would have peace, you can have it in that way; you can have it in no other way. Life can only be judged by the end. What shall the harvest be? What will be the end of all our sowing? Shall we see all the evil of our doings, or will God in mercy

hide it in some degree from our eyes? Man—O man—it is a terrible thing to live! It is not so terrible a thing to die, the terribleness is in the living—in the living without life, in the living without God, in the living without hope. You tell me that at the present moment you are well fed and well clad. Away with all your materialism! God will look upon it, and it will fly away; He will rebuke it, and it cannot stand before Him; and whilst you are to-day well and happy without God, to-morrow you will be in difficulties which God only can deliver you out of. In a moment your wealth may be gone, in a moment your harvest may be withered out of sight. Is this severe? Then read the text the other way. Is it a very severe thing to defy the Giver and yet to go into everlasting darkness? Read the text the other way. If you sow the right seed and plough the land faithfully and fall into the arrangements established by the living God, all will be well with you. If you give out of your abundance, you will get back more than ever you had in your power to give. So that the law is equal, it is equal on both sides, it cannot be trifled with; if it is severe on the one side, it is gentle on the other. I ask you to attend to this law of equality and this great scheme of righteousness. Say ye unto the righteous, It shall be well with him; say ye to the wicked, It shall be ill with him. These are two messages, and we are bound to deliver them both. We do not like to deliver the one; it will be unpopular, it will not be graciously received, men will reject it, and they will say, Surely we cannot hear this any more. No, you may not, you may put your fingers in your ears, and go against all warnings, but the warning is still there, it is just the same, it never changes, it never goes down in tone, it is still there; and if you would remove your fingers from your ears for one little moment, you would hear its terrible avenging cry. The same holds good with regard to the law of mercy and peace, that everywhere that great law is operating in favour of those who are in sympathy with it, and who long to carry out all its meaning and enjoy all its rewards.

Now what shall your decision be? I am now

coming to a period of life when I must have decision, I must ask my hearers now and frequently and again and again what they mean to do. Is a lifetime to be wasted upon you, or am I at the latter end to see something of the harvest and the garnering? Oh, that would be reward and joy exceeding abundantly above all that human imagination can conceive. Yield now. I ask you to do nothing that is unreasonable; on the contrary, I come to you with a solid argument. The argument is that if you do good you will get good, and if you do evil you will reap the reward of your evil, which is shame and misery and everlasting distress. Now we come to the verdict. We come to the solemn end. What is it to be? Some of you have had a long time of sin, and you have a long time to make up, and do not imagine you can make up a lifetime in five minutes. But this you can do, you can begin again, you can begin as if you meant to end in the right road, and God, of His great mercy, wherewith He brought us again into a lively hope through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, will multiply that mercy to us, and it shall be reckoned to us as if we had lived beside Him and in the sunlight of His presence for a full lifetime. But we must be earnest about it, we must be in dead earnest; we must look as if we were earnest, and we must mean that we would undo all our past if we could, in so far as it is contrary to the will of God, and that we would begin a new life, and live it long and live it well in the grace and strength of our Blessed Saviour. If you say Amen, I shall rejoice as one who has not laboured in vain.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the triune God, abide with us, and grant us a good harvest. Amen.

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we rejoice that we see Jesus Christ, and that the light of His day is round about us—a smile, a promise, a dawning heaven. We thank Thee for the plain words of Christ. May we have the spirit of interpretation, that we may be able to follow Christ in all the meaning of His sayings. We thank Thee for Thy Son Jesus Christ; He is the Saviour of the world; He came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them—by this sign we know Him—He saved others, Himself He could not save. Lead us, we pray Thee, into the meaning of this deep saying, that we may know the meaning of salvation, that we may feel all its pathos, and answer all its music, and be right glad in the Lord and in the power of His resurrection. We thank Thee for the Book that tells us about Him in language so simple, yet so deep; so near at hand, yet so remote. The Lord help us to understand at once the distance and the nearness of the Lord's salvation. Let the Lord hear us when we ask for pardon for our sins, for the multiplication of grace, for the increase of knowledge and wisdom in the Name of Jesus. And thus may we in the House of Prayer receive already the answer to our cry, the sufficient answer to our hearts' tender, anxious supplication. Amen.

CLXVII.

RELIGION MADE EASY.

"*It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem.*"—1 KINGS xii. 28.

HIS is the voice of a friend surely. He speaks feelingly, and therefore he speaks sincerely. "Jeroboam built Shechem in Mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart"—that is what we want to get at, what men are saying in their hearts, not what they are talking in public; many an appearance on a religious platform is a lie and a blasphemy—"Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: if this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem"—old reminiscences will assert themselves, old associations will make their power felt—"then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah." That speech he made to nobody but himself; he made it to no cheering multitude, he talked to his own heart in these strange words. He only anticipated our day. We talk to ourselves; we say one thing aloud, and we say another thing in silence. "Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto the people, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem"—it is a long way; you need not go—"behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." He sought to put off the people with two calves; he made the calves of gold, but they were calves still. That is going on to-day; this seduction is tried upon every one of us. What an opinion some people must form of us to think that we can be satisfied with calves of gold! how far down a people must have gone when those who are set over them think that they can be satisfied with calves of gold!

Here was an adroit and subtle appeal to human nature. Tell the people they are tired; seem to be very anxious about their health; assure them that nothing but a true concern for their physical condition could ever have impelled you to consider the long distance to Jerusalem. Keep them away from Jerusalem, keep them away from the old songs and the old memories, from the reminiscences that start up and make a powerful appeal to human pathos; as it were, lay your petting hand upon them and say, "It is too far for you to go to Jerusalem; you could do the same thing much nearer home." This is a powerful appeal to human nature. Here is a grandfatherly king; here is a king who, even upon his throne, thinks it worth his while to save us walking or otherwise journeying to Jerusalem: what an excellent man, what a thoughtful king, what a treasure of a friend! Fools! he is trying to keep you away from Jerusalem, the city of God, the tabernacle and temple of the Most High; he is seeking to keep you away from the vision that would do good to your eyes, and mayhap might bring you back to old ways and ways forsaken. Here is a great Jeroboam studying my convenience. Laying his hand upon my poor back, he says, "You are getting older than you were, sweet, dear friend; you are not so young as you used to be." Think of the king talking to me, and talking in such a tender, gracious, loving fashion! He says I am not so young as I used to be, and he says that I ought not to hurry myself, and I ought not to do this, that, and the other, because I am not so young as I used to be. O, I will think well of that man! Sweet Jeroboam!—he wants me to walk a mile less on Sunday, he wants me to take care of myself; when he said good-bye, he said, "Now, take care of yourself!" It was so good of him. Whenever you are tempted to make religion easy, suspect an evil design. When a man tells you it is too far to go, that he would not advise you to go, that he looks very seriously upon the idea of your going five miles on a Sunday—he says that for himself he does not approve of Sunday travelling—whenever you meet a man who does not approve of Sunday travelling, and

tells you so, you can draw conclusions from his speech. Whenever you are tempted to make your religion easy, know that the devil is in the suggestion. Whenever the devil appears to be kind, he is hostile. He once said to Jesus Christ, "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread: why hunger any longer? command the stones, and they will instantly become alive. That is what I should suggest; I have not the power to do it, or I would gladly do it, but you have the power; I should exercise it, and spread a table in the wilderness,"—and behind he looked the devil that he was! Jesus said unto him, "Man shall not live by bread alone, it is written, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." But these are instances in which the enemy sought to simulate the appearance of a friend, and he said to you, "It is a long way to go there, I would not go if I were you; I would not go this morning anyhow, because it looks as if it would rain or as if it would snow: the glass is certainly going down; if I were you, I think I should not go this morning." He knows that if he can lure you away once it will be easy for him to lure you away twice.

Now Jesus Christ never made religion easy. There is where the great difficulty lies with Jesus Christ. He will not allow us to be at ease, and He will not allow us to think that the acceptance of His religion will bring us into a state of lulling, self-easing, and self-considering sentimental reflection. He said, "If any man will follow Me, let him take up his cross daily." "But, Lord, is there no way of making Thy religion easy and acceptable and consequently popular?" "No, My religion was never easy, never less than a cross, never other than a piercing sword." Here are two men who think they are very religious, and they conduct their religious exercises in the form of a discussion. Discussion is cheap. Jesus Christ always conducted His exposition of Christianity under the form of a crucifixion. When He began He did not use the word "crucify," but He used words that meant crucify in the long run. "Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "Repent" meant shutting up the wine-cellar, dismissing your accomplices in evil; it meant cutting off your right

hand, plucking out your right eye, and doing away with everything that made life pleasant. That is a curious way of making Himself popular. He never did make Himself popular in the ordinary sense of that term. He made Himself unpopular, He made Himself utterly disagreeable; He would not rest content with things as they are, but only with things as He would make them, and what He preached He practised. He went before, and did it all; He said, "Follow Me, follow Me to death, to self-denial, to self-crucifixion, to what the world calls misery; follow Me." Ah, I wish He had said Go, but He said Come. If He had told me to pull myself together, and be the man He knew I was, I could have cheated Him; but He said, "There, in that footstep, now the next; it is a long stride, take it, and put your feet right here: come, follow!" It was a strange, weird voice, it was religious talk, but not like religious preaching, as I have always been accustomed to hear preaching. He said, "Follow." Follow what? "Follow Me"—not a precept, but an example, not a motto, but a living force.

"If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Now let us modernise this language. "Don't you think the church is a long way off? You see, you can't go to that church unless you travel on Sunday; that would be a wicked thing to do, would it not?" He would break all the Sundays in the year if he could do so without anybody knowing it; he is very anxious that you should keep the Sabbath—very. He knows that if you go nearer you will go further; he knows that if you go to that man over yonder, whose touch is like a flame of fire, he will suffer for it after you have been there. "Don't you think you have now earned the title of a little release? Don't you think that you have been there long enough? Why,

I heard you speak about that place twenty years ago, aye, as far back as five-and-twenty years I heard of you going there, and being enamoured, and learning many things that were very beautiful; when I heard you repeat them, I thought they were very beautiful indeed; but don't you think now that the time has come when you might safely give that sort of thing up? And you do not feel quite so well as you used to do." He has touched you upon your weakest point; he knows that you have just a little twinge of rheumatism, and he is confident that it is all due to your Sunday travelling. If that could be given up, then you might travel where you liked on the week-day, only keep out of that man's way. Yes, that is a powerful assault upon human nature. He varies the plan, he says, "Well, now, I like you to go to that church, he is a very honest man is that clergyman, he is a very eloquent man, and I can overlook some of his High Church practices, and so forth; I do not allude to these things at all; he is no doubt a very clever man, and he is a very earnest man, and I wish we had more like him; but don't you think you have had enough of him? It is a long way to Jerusalem." Perhaps he will praise the man that he may the more certainly destroy him; an acute and skilled wrestler, he lifts his antagonist a little way from the ground in praise and eulogy that he may the more surely and fatally cast him to the ground with his knee upon his breast.

It is very curious, is this study in human nature. It opens up so many possibilities; it touches so many weak points. He says, "Now, don't you think that you are giving away too much money? I say that it is all right to be giving away a certain proportion, but I think that all things ought to be done with a clear eye towards proportion. Now you have been giving away money at the rate of—let me see—at the rate of ten per cent.; you have been giving God a tenth part of your income. Now, although I quite approve of giving God some part of your income, I suggest that you give too much. Don't give it all at once; certainly not, you are perfectly right to give a certain proportion, but I think less than you do give." When a man is so

very anxious that you should do less, suspect him, and show him the door. When he is so very anxious that you should lay up for a rainy day at the Lord's expense, turn him out into a very rainy day. Now you said when you were a young man that you would give, if the Lord would prosper you, ten per cent. of all you got. Do you know that in saying so you were quoting the words of a very bad man—yes, about the worst man of his day? It was the bargaining Jacob who said, "Now, Lord, as I have seen this vision, let us come to a clear understanding about this. You know that I am an honest man; now, if you will prosper me on my journey, if you will go with me and quiet all mine enemies, and open every door for me, well, now, look here, I do not object to give you ten per cent. for your providence." Ah, the bargaining, supplanting Jacob, the commercial Jacob, he it was that proposed a commission to the Almighty of ten per cent., he wrought this blasphemy, but, not knowing the origin of this custom of tithe-paying, people have thought it was in the Bible, and therefore they quoted Jacob just as certainly as they would quote Satan or anybody else whose name happened to be in the Bible. Why, he should have said, "All that I have is Thine; it is the Lord that giveth me power to get wealth. Lord, I will keep back none of it, not a penny. Thou shalt have it all." That would have been the grandeur of faith, the very royalty of love. Instead of that, he started the argument, as all men start their arguments, at the wrong point, and said he would give God so much if He would give Jacob everything.

Now when you were prospered in business, I tell you how you reasoned; this is what you said in your heart: "Well, now that I have £200 a year, I think that I will give God £20 a year." Then you got £2,000 a year, and you said, "Well, but I used to give £20." Yes, that was when you had £200 a year, but you now have £2,000 a year, and so you ought to give the Lord £200. "Well, but," you say, "£200 is a great sum." Then you got £4,000 a year, and you ought to give £400 a year, but you dropped it and made it £100. And the Lord dropped it also, you both dropped it together,

and remember that the Lord keeps His covenant, whatever we may do with ours. And so the £4,000 a year went down to £3,000 and £2,000 and £1,000, and came and matched your giving. That is how it will always be. Then the tempter says, "Well, now, could you not get all you want nearer home?" He is very anxious that we should keep nearer home; he is very anxious, is the enemy, that we should not be out of nights. He is very anxious indeed that we should be very careful of our health. He says, "You know, you have only one life to live, you had better take care of it. Now could you not get somebody nearer home?" But the curious thing is that everything is about four miles from home. It is a very curious thing, but there is nothing in the nearer circle, or if there is, it is for people who are living four miles away from it. It is always four miles off, everything I want in London. Can I not get something round the corner? Oh, well, you can get something round the corner, but it is really not worth getting. And then the man who lives four miles away says, "Is there nothing that I could get, something else that I should really profit by?" And the voice says to him, "You can get it about four miles off. Four miles is a long way to go on a dark night, I think you had better reconsider the thing." Oh, these men who are so anxious that we should consider ourselves at the expense of our souls! This man wants to take away from me my bread. Why, he is a friend of mine, he is in name, but he is not in reality. Why, if I did not go to this church or that church, whatever church it may be, I could not live, and the man wants to take it away from me, and tells me that I can get something nearer; and oh, he does not know how cruel he is or he would not do it. Observe, the man who is next to you will suit some other man, and he may have to go his four miles to hear him; and thus things are wrought up, and inter-wrought into great unities and vital and useful associations.

Now here is a favourite argument with my friend the enemy, with my friend the modern Jeroboam. He says, "I quite approve of your going up to Jerusalem, but don't you think once a day is enough—eh? I

would not take it off all at once, you know, I would have you go there say in the morning, but don't you think that the morning is enough, is it not wise to take care of yourself now that the days are getting shorter? Don't you think that a man in October or November ought to be a little more careful than he was twenty years ago?" Well, you touch me on a very delicate point there, but if I go once a day I must go twice, and if I do not go once a day I must not go at all; that is how it is with me. Oh, I love to be there, I count all time lost that I do not spend in the temple of the House of God; open to me the gates of righteousness, and I will enter therein with joy. I wait for them to be opened; I haunt the door until it throws itself back on its hinges and admits me; you do not know what it is to me. Do not listen to these Jeroboams, my young friends. They will say, "It is all very well"—the doctor says this sometimes—I do not know what doctor, and I do not mean to inquire, but he says, "You know I am of opinion that if you had a bicycle, and went out somewhere on a Sunday, it would do you far more good than sitting in church, any kind of church; I am no bigot, I do not care what kind of church you sit in, but whatever you do, I should get myself a bicycle and go out and worship nature." Well, now, another man says, "I am not so fond of the bicycle, I do not care so much about it; I often say there is nothing to be compared for moving every joint and calling every muscle into play as walking." Another man says, "I do not care about your bicycles and your walking, nothing suits me so well as a motor-car." Anything to get away from church—the bicycle, or feet, or motor-car—anything that will only get you away from church. But what will you do on wet Sundays? On wet Sundays? Yes. I think then I should go to church on wet Sundays, say once a day, and read the rest of the time. The whole thing is based upon a delusion. I call upon you to be men. The temptation is to make religion easy, to make it palatable, to change its form, and to relax the severe and grasping discipline of the case. Religion, by its very etymology, cannot be made easy; it is religion, a binding back, a keeping to a covenant, a standing up to an oath; that is what it is. Religion is obligation at its

highest, and no man can make the very supreme obligation of life an instance or an illustration of ease, of luxury.

Now, what does the Bible claim? Only one seventh of your time, but, when it claims the seventh, it means that the six-sevenths also belong to God. Don't you be led away into the high-falutin, poetic notion that because all your time belongs to God, therefore it does not matter what you do on Sundays. Keep a seventh of it peculiarly holy, then we will know how you will spend the rest. Keep one day in the week sacred before you attempt to keep the whole seven sacred. "Thou shalt remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." When you have done that you can keep Monday, and then Tuesday, and if God entered into Jacob's covenant at all, He said, "I will take the tenth as thou dost give it." He only accepts the tenth in that sense that He may take the whole nine-tenths that remain, and thus get hold of the entire property. That is the true reading of religion. Now you go to Jesus Christ and ask Him to say what He will have you do. And Jesus Christ never set any man an easy task; Jesus Christ never said, "You might do much less; you give away too much, you worship God in spirit and in truth too much." What He did say could be done too excessively was false worship, to be making new moons and Sabbaths, and fastings and observances, and all these things which were really nothing better than luxuries, to be turning all these into excess and surfeit. The moment religion becomes easy to you, give it up!

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the triune God, be our shield and buckler, and our eternal resource. Amen.

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thou art Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, the All-in-all. We are but of yesterday, and know nothing; our years are a handful, and we die whilst we breathe. Oh that men were wise, that they understood these things, that they would consider their latter end. Thou hast hidden these things from us; may we seek them that we may find them. It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, and it should be the joy of man to discover it. Behold, Thou hast set life and death before us; may we choose the life and reject the death. Thou art great and mindful of us in all ways, Thou dost never for one moment forget us; Thou art storing our inheritance for us, and in Thy world of brightness we shall discover the riches of Thy treasure. We see nothing now, our eyes are holden that we should not see; by-and-by we shall see who has been talking with us by the way, and making our hearts burn, and giving us many a token for good. Help us to wait until the end, help us to be patient with godly patience, and after the manner and scale of God's own patience. We would be holy as our Father in heaven is holy, we would be merciful as our Father in heaven is merciful; that is to say, on His scale and after His manner, although in our own degree. The Lord make us perfect men, holy men, having one design and one only, and that is to be imitators of Christ Jesus the Lord. We have come through much difficulty this morning to the house of the Lord, and the Lord was here first, and He will abundantly reward us and give us joy of heart. If any man is overborne by the weather, give him sense of triumph, and may he hold in disdain all the circumstances of the outward life, that he may gain the spirit of the blessed life within. We thank Thee with all our love for Thy kindness to us. Thou hast thundered to us in great judgments, and Thou hast whispered to us in gentle strains. Thou hast adapted Thy ministrations to our necessities. Hence we stand before Thee to-day, whole men, perfect men, having our reasoning faculties and a thousand treasures and joys. We will sing aloud unto the Lord, and will magnify His name; let the Lord hear us, and it shall be well with our souls. Wilt Thou forgive our sins? they are many, they are black; we cannot forgive ourselves, but God can forgive us; help us to make confession and restitution, and then leave ourselves in the hands of mercy. We will abide in the house of the Lord for ever; if there is hope any-

where, there is hope here, and because this is God's house, and the tabernacle of His grace, our hearts shall be strong in the confidence of the Lord.

Hear us in these things, for Christ's sake; in Christ's name we pray; for His glory we breathe; in His strength we trust. Amen.

CLXVIII.

GOD IN HUMAN LIFE.

"*I took thee from the sheepcote.*"—1 CHRON. xvii. 7.

HERE are so many things in life that have to be explained. There are so many knots in life that have to be untied. We shall one day know how it all was; that is the day we are longing for, the day of revelation and disentanglement. Many a time might David have said, "I have wondered how I came to be here, so great, so prosperous, so wonderfully protected; I cannot make it out; another man might have filled my place more worthily mayhap." Whilst he was thus wildly talking, that Voice that always whispers to us said to him, "I took thee from the sheepcote," and the man was more dazed by the explanation than he was by the mystery. That is part of our discipline. "I took thee from the sheepcote": I saw thy capabilities, I measured thy strength, I first gave it; then I saw through what difficulties thou must pass in order to become famous in Israel, the mightiest archer, the mightiest singer that ever lived amid the chosen people; it was I—I—I. That is a sufficient explanation. He who made the heavens and the earth chose the shepherd. "I have often wondered how it was, there is a far more likely man, I could name him." But it is not your business to name anybody, it is God who names, elects, and leads, and finishes: "I am Alpha and Omega."

"I have been with thee whithersoever thou hast walked." "I have often thought there was someone

near me; there was a brush on my face; the moment I turned round to see the breath, it was gone, but I know it was there. I have been hunted upon the mountains, driven into the caves, turned out to wrestle with the winds, and yet I felt all the time that I was not alone; I said, 'I will give in,' but the voice said, 'Thou shalt not.'" God never gives in. He takes a long time, but He takes it, and He wins. We sometimes think ourselves first causes; we would not say so, not for the world, but at the same time we think we had a good deal to do with it: whereas we had nothing at all to do with it. "When I was by the slippery place, 'I walked with thee whithersoever thou hast walked'; when I was out amid the perils of the night I felt there was someone near, I could not name Him, yet now I come to think of it, I wonder I did not name Him; it was so clear, so plain, and yet I did not sing a hymn to the name of Him who led me. I did not say I was clever, but I thought it; I did not say I made my great fortune, but I felt that it could not have been made without me." How to get rid of atheism is the great problem; how to shake it out of every fold of the soul's garment and be a believer—that is the agony. We are good in spots, we are patched together, strips of atheism with strips of faith, and we disbelieve while we pray, we blaspheme whilst we worship.

Here is the explanatory voice—oh, the silver music of it!—"I have been with thee whithersoever thou hast walked." We make a good deal of "whosoever" wherever it occurs in the sacred record—"Whosoever believeth in Me shall be saved." We say, "whosoever—whosoever"; we take in the man at the uttermost extremity, and we flood his ear with the music of "whosoever." Let us make a good deal of this "whithersoever." But I have sometimes gone on the wrong road. "I know it, but I was always there to bring thee back." Many a time I have gone to the wrong place. "Yes, and I was there before thee with a disappointment." My life has been one grand mistake. "No, it would have been if I had not walked with thee; take My estimate of things, and not thine own: I have cut off all thine enemies from before thee." He will not be shut out of our life. I

wondered why the enemies gave in so soon. "I could tell thee, I weakened their arms, I broke their chief muscles; I did not make Myself heard or seen amid all the contest, but I was there. If a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh his enemies to be at peace with him; no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." Ah, that looks as if it may have been so; I never could have got rid of my enemies in that way; why, if I but touched them, they seemed to vanish in smoke; but it was not my hand that touched them, I was perplexed by them, I was greatly and sadly overcome by them, and yet in a moment, lo, they vanished away as a fog vanishes when the wind strikes it. "I have made thee a name like the name of the great men that are in the earth." "I wondered how my name was made great," said David. "It seemed to rise above all the other names, it was a name to conjure by; kings mentioned my name with fear, and as for those that dwelt afar off beyond the sea, my name was to them a terror, an appalling and thrilling amazement. Many a time in my little hut amongst the sheepfolds I have wondered how it was that my name came roaring along the winds; now here is the explanation—'I have made thee a name.'" Fame is God's gift. Fame is influence. Do not despise fame. And His fame went through all Syria, and they brought unto Him all that were sick and diseased and had the palsy, and poured them down at His feet; He healed them. That is always the right use of fame—to heal them, to make them whole, to make them better. When your fame is so used it is well used.

Was ever man comforted like this? He adds another word, for now that He is on these terms with David and is going to disappoint him, He will prepare him for the disappointment in a splendid preface:—"The Lord will build thee an house." Man likes a house, and likes a sure place to dwell in; it may not be great, but it is his; he says, "This is my door, we will enter in here, and here we shall find rest and immortality." What more could He do for him? He is going to disappoint him; all this is leading up to a rebuke. Always suspect some danger, man, when you possess delight; it is one

of the doggerels on which you were reared. He says, "I took thee from the sheepcote, I have been with thee whithersoever thou hast walked, I have cut off all thine enemies, I have made thee a name like the name of the great men that are in the earth: I will build thee an house. Thine hands are bloody, and thou shalt not gather these stones that are shaped into My temple. But you have had your lot, you have seen your destiny, you know the multitude of the comforts that have surrounded you day and night all these years. Nathan was wrong, Nathan spoke to thee too hurriedly, I have sent Nathan back to thee to recall his words, and to say the Lord is not served by building. Thy son shall build Me an house, but the house building shall be none of thy doing; thou didst work according to thy day, I am not rebuking thee, thou didst work by thine own opportunity, and according to thine own lights, and thou art the father of the temple-builder, but not the temple-builder himself." That is the text.

What is the explanation of it all so far as we are concerned? It is to show us God's place in human life. What is written here is written everywhere. It is the same with you and with me as it was with David; there are things we may do and things we may not do. God will always have to work with imperfect tools; even Solomon will not be the perfect man at the end that he was apparently going to be at the beginning. We all have to work according to our tools and opportunities, and the best of us is a bad workman. I wonder we dare do anything in the house of God; to light a lamp is too great a work for me, to have anything to do with the treasure of the house of the Lord is to me in many a mood a blasphemy, yet there are those of us who think we honour the house of God by attending to it. It is not so; it is we who receive the honour, not the house that is honoured. When we get to know that view of things, we shall take a right estimate of life, and a right estimate of duty and of opportunity and service. There is not a man here, were all the kings of the earth within hearing, who can honour the house of God. The proudest man amongst us, proud

with a religious pride, and holy, noble dignity, is nothing; he is unacceptable to God and unprofitable, God is pleased to make use of him to further the ends of His gracious government. Often go back to the beginning. I like a man who is not ashamed of the sheepcote. "I took thee from the sheepcote." "Oh, Lord, sometimes I wish Thou hadst not done so; Thou didst call me to dignity, but to suffering; Thou didst call me to great opportunities, and therefore to great agonies and distress." That is it. Go back to your beginning. What was your beginning? Was your mother a widow? were you one of eight? was the getting of bread a problem in your house? how to spend a shilling so as to rub another penny out of it, was that your political economy? think of it, and now where are you, and what are you doing? You are talking about the poor, but are you helping them? Do you forget your own beginnings, and thus lose your own endings? Here is God engaged in His great work of sovereign election. "I chose thee, I selected thee, I walked before thee, I gave thee." He will not let us lay our finger upon one little point and say, "That point is mine, I did that out of my own ability and cleverness, God had no share in that." That would spoil the whole life; He will not allow us to talk so; for His own reasons, He will have all the glory: give it to Him, and profit in the giving of it.

And here is God accompanying men. If ever we said we would go out alone, He said, "I will see to it, he shall not go out alone, for this is a land of wild beasts, and he may cross the path of the lion, and come near the retreat of the bear; I will go with him, I will prevent him—that is to say, I will go between him and danger; I will go before him, and he shall put his footprint where I set My foot." God is closer than we think; God is nearer than we have sometimes dreamed or imagined. You know what a wonderful thing the light is, and how it can show us almost round the corners. You are lying in your bed, and you are saying to yourself, "There is nothing in this room; I alone am here, and there is no environment." You touch the little spring of light, and the electric blaze reveals the room to you in all its furnishing and com-

fort and luxury. It would have been all there if you had not seen it; your seeing it there did not put it there. O remember that, and live in God's furnished house. God defending men, sending the blow the other way, saying to the bolt, "Do not strike him yet, his work is only beginning, I have more for him to do, and he must do it: go back, thou bolt of death." We have often wondered how we have been preserved. "When mine enemies, my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell"; I was within their reach almost, but the almost of exhausted strength is the infinity of God. "The same night, when Herod would have brought him forth"—well, what happened then? Peter was sleeping between the soldiers, and in the morning he was gone, and Herod was disappointed and shamed and utterly distressed. It is God's way—narrow, hairbreadth escapes.

It is wonderful what God can do in a moment. It may be so with you. You are very near the end now, and you know it, but your wife does not; you are very near the end, but the children are kissing you as if you had come into a great estate. Well, God can deliver you just where you are: it is the last night with you, it is the last opportunity, it is the eleventh hour, but God shows Himself Master of the eleventh hour, and He delights to do great things just before the clock strikes. Oh, He is a wonderful Father! He is kind and pitiful, He knows exactly what we can bear. "There hath no temptation happened unto you but such as is common unto men, and with every temptation He will make a way of escape." Do not let your heart go down; why, when your heart goes down, you have all gone down together. But suppose that He should order it so, that I may have to undergo great tribulations? Then He will prepare you for the undergoing of them. It is wonderful how God prepares men for the uttermost step, and the last brink. To tell you years before it comes to pass that you will certainly one day meet with a supreme distress would certainly drive you mad; it was told you too soon, the vision was premature. When it began to darken upon you, and you thought at last that it might be possible, you did not know how near

the angel was to strengthen you. So it shall be in your house. You have written to me to say in what fear you live your days, and I reply to you, I know it, and there is a way of knowing it that half removes it; there is a method of sympathy, there is a science of sympathy. So then, whether it is going to be life or death, O poor man, trust the living God. You cannot speak to Him, I know it, but you can, so to say, press His Hand. You have nothing to say to this poor soul that is in great waters; I do not want you to say anything, but I want you to put out your hand in the dark and get hold of his, and press it meaningly, press it with significance, press it in a way that says, It is very dark, but you are not alone.

God requires an account of man. He says in effect, What did you do with all these mercies I gave you? how have you made the circle complete? I asked you to be fellow-workers with Me—have you been fellow-workers in very deed with God? Then again, think how little after all man has to do with his own career. We begin by thinking that we have a good deal to do with it, but we end by saying that we have a very little indeed to do with the shaping of our own ends. I am a man of experience, and I lay my experience before you, and I offer it to you for your sustenance and for your good. Is it better to live or not to live? I must have time to think of that question. Is life worth living? Sometimes I think not, but these are my dark, foggy, cloudy, murky days; in November a little pessimism is allowed to a man. But there are other days—bright, lengthening summer days—when I laugh the idea to scorn, and I say, Yes! life is worth living, if lived in Christ.

Benediction.

Now may grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the triune God, abide with us, until all the wandering is over and rest is come in heaven. Amen.

Prayer.

LORD, teach us how to read Thy Book that we may find in it hidden treasure, great wealth for the soul, and for the soul's spending. Grant unto us the joy of those who find much treasure in Thy Word; it is hid treasure, it is hidden in a field, it is to be dug for as men dig for silver and for fine gold. Help us to be deep readers of Thy Word, appropriating every syllable of Thine, and knowing that there is in it the very sustenance of the soul. We bless Thee for a book that is full of enigmas, wonders, surprises; because every one of them takes us further up and further on until we see the King in His beauty. The Lord teach us that all things are provided for in His holy Book. May we know that nothing has been forgotten, everything is there, just where it ought to be, and adapted to our soul's need in all the variety and agony of its hunger. We bless Thee for a book that never ends, for a revelation that is always beginning, for a testimony that is clothed with the emphasis of eternity. Good Lord, help us to be wise readers, understanding men, who have seen somewhat of the compass of Thy revelation, and who have felt something of the music of Thy purpose. The Lord save us from slavery to the letter; grant unto us the imagination and liberty of the spirit, and may we revel in God's Book as in an inheritance that can never be exhausted. Let the mariner find here his release, and let those who have the joy of harvest find here the music of their harvest hymn; and may men who are perplexed and sore troubled, not knowing which way to turn, come to Thy Book that they may find guidance and liberty. And may those who look into other books, expecting to find what never can be found therein, turn back and look into the light of liberty, the book of Thy Spirit, the wisdom and riches of Thy revelation; and there in Moses and in the Psalms and in the prophets and in all the Scriptures they will find the Son of David and David's Lord. Amen.

CLXIX.

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE.

"*How then doth David in spirit?*"—MATT. xxii. 43.

E have read the lesson. "While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? whose Son is He? They say unto Him, The Son of David. He said unto them, How then doth David in spirit"—forecast the ages, and see the Son of God, the Son of man, the manger and the Cross, and the lordship? How do you account for that? We may not know the meaning of our own words; prophets never do, or they would not be prophets. They cry and writhe in agony, and tear their mantles and cast them on the wind, and they are madmen. The world's madmen are the world's sanest rationalists. But men cannot be interpreted always by their time; we have to leave sentences five centuries to bear their fruit, the aloe tree bears fruit once in ten years: these aloes of the spirit only come to colour and to fruitage in five centuries. Woe to the man all of whose words can be interpreted on the spot; they belong to the spot, they are not words with fringes and hidden meanings and strange omens of unrest, wanting to say something but unable to say it. On the day of Pentecost the men could not say all they wanted to say; they were under the influence of a great flame, a great wind, a great roaring thunder from the whole heavens; so much so that the people who were not under the influence said they were drunk. It will be a poor time for the Church when we can understand all she says; she will be a little neat Church, not a great prophetess, not a bride of the Lamb, not one whose whole soul is sometimes caught up in the highest rhythm and unable to express itself, except in language which appears to be exaggerated, if not mad. A little madness would be a welcome sign of

life in the Church; she would seem then as if she were made after the pattern of her Lord.

Some men are not to be judged by the letter. They say the letter, they can be printed in letters, but they have meanings utterly and widely beyond the letter. "I am the Spirit which cometh down from heaven. I am the Water of life; if any man drink of Me he shall thirst no more. Except a man eat of My flesh and drink of My blood he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." We said when we heard the young fair Man, with such a face, marred beyond all marring of man, "Come away; He is not coherent, He is caught up in a spirit of ecstasy; you must not listen to Him to-day. Come back again, and on other days He will speak you fair. Yea, He will sit down with you and talk with you the common language, but for to-day I pray you leave Him." Jesus Christ had a way of speaking; unless you got into His way you would sometimes think He was mad. I do not wonder that the people thought He was crazy; all His maxims were so ideal, all His thoughts were so big and burning, they seemed bigger than He was, and therefore the people could not understand Him; He spake in parables, beautiful verbal pictures that could never be framed, that stretched away on the canvas of infinity. He "spake not of taking rest in sleep." Anybody could have done that. He said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." And the disciples said, "Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well." Howbeit Jesus spake not of taking rest in sleep—the first meaning, the common and ordinary music; He spake of a deeper sleep. "Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead"—the only word the men could understand; He descended to their level, He left His own heaven of meaning. Unless we get into this way of Christ's we shall never understand Him. "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" He spake in the spirit. He said, "The words that I speak unto you—O hear Me, and believe this wonderful thing that I am going to say—the words that I speak unto you are spirit and life. The least of them is a poem; the fullest of them is a speared sky. How is it that ye do not understand? Except a man eat of My flesh and drink of My blood he hath no life in him," and they turned away and

said, "How can this man do these things? This is not the language we were brought up in, this is not our mother tongue, this is madness." There the words remain; they are the words on which the universe lives; they are the bread sent down from heaven.

Then what are we to do? We have to read them in the spirit. How, then, saith this Man in spirit, "My flesh is bread indeed, and My blood is drink indeed"? Oh, poor Church! Still at the baby school, still in the kindergarten, not knowing what God is talking about. Shall we be wise from this moment, and learn that we say things in spirit which we cannot say in terms? Then shall we advance and become a bigger Church, with great meanings. It is one of two things with you: either the market-place will get the better of the Church, or the Church will get the better of the market-place; they are in deadly struggle—who for? Now we want to modernise our style. Christianity does not know the meaning of the word modern. We want to speak in a market-place term and figure; it is so easy to be understood. You cannot make the kingdom of heaven easy; you cannot crush the sky between the leaves of any book. Then shall the Church talk her own language still? Yes, she had better talk her own language, her own archaic, beauteous, pathetic language. She must talk a language that is so venerable as to remind us of eternity, and so modern that it might have been invented yesterday. There is nothing new that is true, there is nothing true that is new. Even to-day, never seen before, this poor little grey November day, that never was here before, hath in it, to the prophet's eye, a wrinkling and an agony of eternity. We may mean spiritually more than we can say literally or more than we do say literally.

Attempts have been recently made, that is to say, within the last fifty years, to take away from us many Scriptures that we had dwelt upon with high elation and gratitude to God. For example "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder." What

saith that wild man? "And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Ah, stop him! The torrent is a torrent of madness. So say some to-day; but originally in the ninth chapter of Isaiah, the prophet was speaking in the spirit, probably not knowing to whom he referred, probably giving vent to a great agony of thought; he piled his words as mountain may be piled on mountain, because he cannot express the inexpressible. Are you going to allow that passage to be taken away from you—"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder"? Let Him in; we have been waiting for Him; this is the Son for whom we have been tarrying. He shall fill up all the spaces of our life and thought and desire, and bring in the kingdom of God. Do we then say that originally it did not apply in some limited degree to a historical personage? Nothing of the kind; let it apply in some degree and in some way to whom it may, it can only receive the fulness of its meaning when it arrives at Bethlehem. So also with the seventy-second Psalm; there is One coming—who can He be? "He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy"—they need salvation—"and shall break in pieces the oppressor"—His a mightier arm than the arm of the enemy; let Him come! "In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." Oh, name Him—who can He be? Here we deal with pronouns, we want the substantive—we shall get it at Bethlehem. "They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence; and precious shall their blood be in His sight. And He shall live, and to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for Him continually; and daily shall He be praised. There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like

Lebanon : and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. His name shall endure for ever." But who is He? O thou man of the harp, and psalmist of Israel, name Him! He shall be named at Bethlehem. There are intermediate fulfilments. There are men in history who keep alive the prophecy; they are appointed of God to hold up in the light the seventy-second Psalm, and the promise of the Child and the Son, and many other great prophecies, but they will not be completely fulfilled in the letter and in the spirit until Jesus is born in Judea.

They want to take away from us in some sense the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of the servant of Jehovah. Does he speak of some intermediate person? does the whole prophecy pour out its meaning upon any one man living or to live? "He was wounded for our transgressions." Who was? "He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Let it have its intermediate fulfilment, it will not be crowned with meaning until it reaches the story of the Cross. In this way I am able to keep many of my favourite passages, yea, I keep them all, and when a man arises in history who in some sense and way takes up these prophecies, I bless him in the name of the Lord; but I say, This is not the full meaning, this is part of the meaning, this is a great solemn section of the meaning, all these intermediate fulfilments are simply to keep the meaning of the prophecy in all its music and pathos alive until it is redeemed in Christ.

Many of the prophets spake in the spirit, and in the spirit they must be interpreted. It is not for any one man to say where the whole meaning runs itself out, it is for us to wait until we can say, "This is the man," and many a time we have said this o'er the cradle of the child; we have said, "This is he of whom Moses and the prophets did write." There has been a wonderful unrest in our soul because we knew that the prophecy had not yet been quite ful-

filled, but when Jesus came He said, "This is the light; they that sat in darkness have seen a great light." Jesus Christ takes up all that the prophets did say, and shows what the prophets themselves did mean, though they, the prophets, did not know their meaning at the time of their ecstasy and their madness.

How beautifully is the whole thing shown to us in that walk to Emmaus! "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself." I think we should not be ashamed of finding Jesus where Jesus found Himself; we should study Jesus Christ's way of reading the Old Testament, and He always found Himself on every page: there a flower, and He said, "I am the Rose of Sharon"; there a trickle of blood —oh, so red, so hot—and He said, "I redeem with a great price." He heard Himself in many an echoed song, and He said, "This is the singing of the ages, and the music is fulfilled in Me." Jesus Christ must set the example of how to read the Bible. He began at Moses—He could not begin earlier—and the Psalms, and the prophets, and, lest that should not be enough or be misunderstood, it is said, "in all the scriptures": they are full of Him, they burn with Him as the bush burned with God. There are those who set aside the Old Testament; I am glad I do not belong to their number: I live on it. Jesus Christ found Himself there. They say, Well, we should confine ourselves to the New Testament where Jesus Christ is, where He lives, and moves, and walks, and works, and serves, and suffers, and dies. I reply, He did all that in the Old Testament. The Rock that followed them was Christ—all Christ, in cloud, in figure, in sudden noise, in incalculable palpitations and throbbings, through all the mystery of historic times. When we met Him at Bethlehem, we said, Rest here, king, prophet, philosopher, pour out your myrrh and your incense, and your frankincense and your gold; pour it all here, this is He of whom Moses and the prophets did write. So the New Testament must be interpreted; you never get to the end of it. The Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His holy Word. We have not

yet begun to understand either the miracles or the parables. We have approached them from our own point of view, and have found fault with them, we have made them a field of criticism. We should approach them from Christ's point of view, and find them to be music that can give rest to the soul, light that can satisfy the vision, and ministry that can appease the hunger of the heart.

Oh, to read the Old Testament as Jesus read it, to see the New Testament in it, to forecast the modern fruitage! Men will read this New Testament and the Old Testament as well for centuries to come, and they will still find in the parables something new, in the miracles something to be applied to the then day of time, how remote soever. This is the wonderful thing about Jesus, that we never get to the real bottom of His unfathomable sayings; you can go a mile further and another mile, and still sound on your way to the meanings that are beyond. Oh, how poor are those creatures who think they have outlived Christ! Christ is the contemporary of all ages. He lives to-day; He is the dying Christ, the living Christ, the constant and never-departing Christ. If He has gone out of sight, it is only that from a higher level He may move the progress of the universe. Christ is to me born every day, and I hear His voice with a new interest morning by morning. It is a stranger voice than I thought it was; there is so much in it; I think He is coming down to me in some tones, and when I begin to be familiar with Him, or with them, behold there is a great withdrawal, and I am made to stand remote from the great Speaker, and the great speech. It is always so. I read the New Testament when a boy, and I have been reading it ever since, and there is not one word in it, not one word that has fallen into decadence, and the more I love the New Testament the more I see in the Old; the Old itself is Bethlehem before Bethlehem, and even Bethlehem is foretold in the pages of prophecy. Truth is old as eternity, but the revelation of it is gradual.

I teach that every century has its own revelation.

Why was not the whole thing revealed at once? It would be impossible, and it would be absurd. There can be no "at once" in the movement of eternity. But could not the men of the first century have understood what the men of the twentieth century understand? No, they could not. The men of the twentieth century have a new responsibility, they have their own vision of God, and they are responsible to God for the use they make of it. That is a wonderful thing. Yes, it is wonderful, and it is significant, and it is educational. We understand more than the prophets ever knew, we have seen the Lord, we have been with Him, we know the mystery which the angels desired to look into. "Their eyes were holden that they should not know Him." That is a very old habit of the Deity; He controls our power of sight. One man denies that this or that exists, and he is quite right if he is to judge of existence by his own vision: the great thing is to get another self with a more penetrating sight, with a more sensitive touch to approach all the hidden mysteries of the universe. And He said unto her, "Mary." And she said, "Rabboni." Why was not Mary cognisant of the figure that was standing beside her? Because her eyes were holden that she should not know Him. He was there all the time; she was there all the time; she thought He was the gardener; she said, "Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." And then the voice said, "Mary!" and she would have been buried in His bosom but for the command to stand back until the time had fulfilled itself. A wonderful passage is that—"For I have not yet ascended unto your Father, My Father, your God, My God; I have not yet—the time will come when I shall have ascended, and return, and then our intercourse will be complete and final." Meanwhile our business is to wait, and not to urge; to believe, and not to see.

Now what I want to impress upon our minds, all of us, is this: Not to be harsh with men who do see what we do not see. It has not been given to any man to see all things, and I want to teach that we are not to be harsh with those who do not see

what we see. The Lord's school hath many scholars. If that is the truth—some remote and shiny point—then every man with his face towards it is orthodox, though he come from east, west, north, south, climbing the mountain that he may grasp the stars. That is orthodoxy, not your little notion and mine, but the great love-truth and the great truth-loving. He is orthodox who wants to know what is true. He may not be nominally orthodox, he may be very far short, he may not attend your church; he thinks he can get more good in some other church, or outside all the churches, but in the soul of him he says, "Show me truth." One day, in proportion to his sincerity, God will condescend to him; then it shall be said again, "They that sat in darkness have seen a great light." Now let us cultivate the spirit of charity. We have great elder brethren called the prophets; they are away amid the gold and joy of the morning, and we are down here: shall we rebuke them, sneer at them? Certainly not; we must be thankful for them. And, you great prophets, wrapt in the robes of the morning, do not you derisively laugh in your elevation at these poor little creatures who are down here, and are determined one day by the power of God and the grace of the Spirit to see what you see, and to broaden and heighten your song of thankfulness.

Prayer.

Almighty God, we thank Thee for Thy Book. It is a mine of wealth; may we be skilled miners therein, and bring out of it much of gold and of silver. We bless Thee for the comfort of Thy Book, for its great wisdom, for its divine charity; we bless Thee that it broadens and not narrows, that it continually aspires to fill the whole space of human need. May Thy Book long abide, and may we love it more and more, for it is the Book of God.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the triune God, abide with us; then shall we not know hunger or thirst, or pain, or death. Amen.

ORDER OF SERVICE.

SUNDAY MORNING, 27TH OCTOBER, 1901.

Voluntary ... ... "Andante" ... ... *Adams*

Anthem 47 ... ... "O Lord, bow down" ... ... *Himmel*

The Lord's Prayer.—*Hawkins.*

Hymn 10 ... "Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven."

1st Lesson. Deut. viii. 7-10.

Chant 20 ... ... "Benedicite, Omnia Opera" ... ... *Booth*

2nd Lesson. John iv. 31-37.

Anthem ... ... "I was glad" ... ... *Horsley*

I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the house of the Lord, for thither the tribes go up to give thanks unto the Name of the Lord. O pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee. Jerusalem is built as a city that is at unity with itself. Peace be within thy walls, and plenteousness within thy palaces.—PSALM cxxii. 1, 4, 6, 3, 7.

Solo: Miss STANLEY LUCAS.

Prayer.

Hymn 231 ... "The Spirit breathes upon the word."

Sermon.

Offertory and Quartette:

"Yea, tho' I walk" ... ... (*Light of the World*) *Sullivan*

Hymn 358 ... ... "Jesu, my strength, my hope."

Benediction and Threefold Amen.—*Gounod.*

Cornet Solo ... ... "The Refuge of the Soul" ... ... *Jones*

Mr. GEORGE HARLOW.

SUNDAY MORNING, 17TH NOVEMBER, 1901.

Voluntary ... ... "Andante Religioso" ... ... *E. Cutler*

Anthem 12 ... ... "I will arise" ... ... *Cecil*

The Lord's Prayer.—*Field.*

Hymn 1 ... ... "O worship the King."

1st Lesson. Jer. xxxi. 31-33.

Chant 67 ... ... "Psalm lxxxiv." ... ...*Norris*

2nd Lesson. Rev. xxi. 3-7.

Anthem ... ... "I am Alpha and Omega" ... ... *Stainer*

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord; which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, Heaven and Earth are full of Thy Glory: Glory be to Thee, O Lord most High. Amen.—REV. i. 8, and the Sanctus.

Prayer.

Hymn 405 ... "Jesus, my all, to Heaven is gone."

Sermon.

Offertory and Quartette:

"God is a Spirit" ... ... (*Woman of Samaria*) *Bennett*

Hymn 401 ... ... "Soldiers of Christ, arise."

Benediction and Threefold Amen.—*Gounod.*

Voluntary ... ... "Offertoire" ... ... *Swift*

[*Thursday Morning*, 10*th October*, 1901.]

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we thank Thee that Thou canst still overbear the strength of man, and make afraid the ambition and the unbelief of those who know Thee not. We bless Thee for the lightning ministry, for the great gospel of fear; we thank Thee for the earthquake that makes men think. Thou doest wondrously in heaven above and on the earth beneath, and Thou dost walk upon the waters as their King. All things are in God's hands. The very hairs of our head are all numbered; Thou dost watch us as if we were of consequence to Thee: and are we not? Thou wilt not forsake the work of Thine own hands; Thou didst not make man to destroy him; in the making of man Thou didst set the purpose of Thy love. We believe in the great redemption, in the great purchase made by blood, in the wondrous commerce that proceeds between Christ and the soul. Behold, the Saviour feeds us with His body, and with His blood, and with all the tender ministries of His inconceivable grace. We have no life in ourselves, our immortality is in the Cross: hence we come to Thee of sweet necessity to tell Thee all things, to invoke Thy blessing, and to receive renewed and repeated and redundant assurances that God is love and will not forsake those whom His Son purchased with blood. We bless Thee for the great mysteries that sometimes affright us, we thank Thee for the voices we cannot trace, but which whisper in the soul messages of fear and messages of joy. The Lord keep us acute in the hearing of our souls, lest we miss one tone of the ineffable music. May we be fully awake, may we always be on the watch-tower. When our souls are dull and are afraid, do Thou send some strong angel to us to say in the valley, Get thee up into the high mountain! Amen.

CLXX.

SEEKING JESUS.

"*I know that ye seek Jesus.*"—MATT. xxviii. 5.

OW much more do the angels know? If they know anything, they may know something more; they may be better acquainted with us than we suppose. We must be of interest to them because we are of interest to their God. The angels are inquirers, students; they desire to look into the meaning of the blood.

It is an angel who speaks in this most tender and musical text. "I know that ye seek Jesus." This is in striking contrast to something that is also related in the context—to the great earthquake. Man is never so helpless as in an earthquake. God keeps the earthquake for special occasions. The sturdiest man amongst us withers away when he feels the earth rocking. I have felt that, and in that hour I was nothing, and less than nothing. By one motion, perhaps never to be described adequately in words, God seems to touch the earth, and it opens and closes, and spews out of its mouth all your towers and temples and towns, and its own mountains. Yet we are the little worms, the intelligent and responsible little creatures, who are trying to get more control over the laws of nature! I present you with an earthquake: work on that, and report when you have concluded your inquiries and your suggestions. "And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning"—can the sun take a photograph of that face?—"and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women"—"It is different with you, you

have no need to fear"—"for I know that ye seek Jesus," and they who seek Jesus need never tremble; earthquake, or no earthquake, their sanctuary is safe. It is a mystery not to be explained to dead brains out of which the very electricity has gone; to such brains there are no angels. There are people who may well fear spiritual presences. These men would not have been afraid of a regiment of soldiers, but they were afraid of what to them was a supernatural and most ghostly presence. There are people who have no dealings with the heavens, so they are frightened very soon, and their strength melts away like water. Many persons—we may be amongst the number—have little or no commerce with heaven; they have no ships upon the intervening sea, bringing spices from the upper land, carrying back tender prayer, that they may be turned into myrrh and frankincense. In the soul there may arise a great expectancy which never can be surprised into fear. Some of us may live so near God that we only fear when we do not see Him; some may hold such deep and sweet communion with the spiritual universe that if they did not see an angel in every sunrise they would be afraid, as if the earth had turned atheist and God had turned His back upon its unbelief. What a difference there is in men! Some heads are like towers, they would lift themselves higher and higher towards the angels; and others are flat, and cannot pray, and do not want to pray, but have a most malign gift of mockery of those who do pray. To be spiritually-minded is to expect the angels. Did you see that white-clad presence that flashed by you now? Certainly, I saw it all. Were you afraid? No, far from being afraid, I was not afraid, because I saw it; if I had not seen it, then I might in very deed have been sorely afraid. Are you, am I, in such tender touch with the spiritual world, that nothing great can surprise us, nothing sublime can amaze our souls? He who lives in Christ expects sublimity, and becomes in a reverent sense familiar with it. He cannot be satisfied with molehills, for he has stood in the Lord's footprints on the top of the highest hill; he knows the horizon, therefore he is not afraid of the dark walls that men have built; he is accustomed to speak in wordless words with

the angels, and if they did not answer him he would be lone and poor.

But for the angels where would some of us be? God trains us away from the earth, so that at a certain spiritual altitude we despise it. After my three years of accumulated misery the earth has no place for me that I want to inhabit. I do not care about having the life lighted, for the light is a mockery, but I want a great highway through light or through darkness, as the case may be, and I want by the Spirit of God to have such acuteness of spiritual hearing that it is impossible for the soul to be alone—least alone when apparently most alone; most hilarious in the soul when most ripped and seared in the face. Some people have no spiritual universe; they say one world is enough for them. They are growing towards poverty, deprivation, and true solitude; they want the whole of their lives cornered into one little measurable space, which they can call their own. They have no outlying life, no unmeasured, unmapped territory; they have a little place cornered off by some oak-fencing, and that they call their own. It would be more their own if they had a spiritual life. That is the mystery of the spiritual commerce, that the more we have of the immeasurable and the inconceivable the more we appreciate the crust of bread with which we appease our hunger. O man, have a God; make one if you have not one; it will do you good to mould a clay god, and stick it above your fireplace and look at it as something that indicates at least a possibility of something beyond your little self and your quaking heart. Have the true God. God is a Spirit: realise the spiritual presence of God, and then you cannot be lonely, nor can you be poor, nor can you be afraid; if the heavens were one burning face you could look upon that face and be glad in Christ Jesus. Then there are others who have no need or cause to fear; they are sons of God, they have secret ways through which they pass to the flashing fountains. They never see the drought of the hot summer, it is nothing to them; they know a way to the wellhead, to the fountains, to the rivers, and that way is known only to those who bathe themselves in the ocean of the divine love. What have you to fear who pray,

who love God, who have accepted the great redemption by blood, and who are now living temples of the living Spirit? John Newton wrote to some wealthy friend whose house had been burned down, and congratulated that friend upon his loss. That loss brought him nearer to the true riches. Some men are driven, scourged, whipped, as with lacerating thongs to prayer. They never wanted to pray, they mocked prayer, but by some ministry of deprivation and distress, they were driven to try it, as you and I have been driven to try medicines in which at one time we had no faith; we have come to this pass which enables us to say, "Well, we have never taken this, we do not like to take it at this time, we seem to have no faith in it, but we are so pressed that we must as a last resort drink this mixture prepared by the hand of learning and of skill." It is thus that some men have been driven to prayer; it seemed to them at a certain point in their life to be prayer or death, religion or infinite midnight. Thus God sends out black angels to bring wanderers home.

Now the difference between the people who fear spiritual presences and the people who do not fear them and rather welcome them, is this: the one people seek the sepulchre, the other seek the Christ. There are many people who have no objection to the sepulchre, there are travellers who go long distances in order to see the sepulchre who would not move an inch to see the Saviour. Such men are lovers of form, special places, extraordinary ceremonies. To see the sepulchre is what they come for; they would be afraid if they saw Him who had lain in it but some three days ago. Some Christians are mere sightseers; they come to church as sightseers, they read religious books as sightseers, they want some new thing in the church; they are lovers of the spectacular and the formal, the brazen and the deafening music or clang of studied noise. If you only go to the sepulchre, you will bring back nothing but the sepulchre. A friend has brought me a model of the tomb in which my Saviour lay. I keep it as a mere ornament; sometimes I wish to throw it out of the house; it is only a sepulchre, a sepulchre without a memory, a

sepulchre without an aureole, a sepulchre that does not want itself seen by the morning. That is enough; I could carry that poor little model sepulchre about with me and get no good from it. We are not saved by a sepulchre, we are saved by Him who lay in it, and His name is Jesus.

"Fear not," though you are seeking Christ at the wrong place, as these women were. We must have greater sympathy with people who are trying by some stumbling way to get at the right end. We have been too severe with the stumblers. They are just as good souls as we are, they may even be nearer heaven than those whose Christianity is a mere correctness. My friends, souls, Christianity is not an exercise in conventional correctness. Some poor honest souls are going to the wrong place, but they are going for the right thing; they are orthodox. Is orthodoxy a given and divinely indicated point? Let us assume that it is so. Keep that elevated point before your mind's eye; now men are coming from the east, from the west, from the north and the south, and they are all orthodox. Why? Because they are seeking the same point. They have come different ways and at different paces, and they are speaking different languages, but they are aiming at the same radiant centre. That is orthodoxy. What is the good of a man coming up from the south to dispute the orthodoxy of a man coming from the north, when they are both going to meet at the point indicated as Truth? He who seeks truth with an honest soul and a clean heart is orthodox, though he does not believe a word that I believe, in its merely alphabetical or controversial sense. Now there may be some here who are seeking Christ in their own way; let us be justly liberal towards such men. Their hearts are aching; they say, we have been too remote from them, we have been inventing an ecclesiastical language which they do not understand, and their poor aching hearts want to find out something about the truth and about love and about that wonderful word called redemption. Let them all come in; if they want to approach us, we ought to want to approach them; we ought not to wait until they get in, we should be at the door ready to receive them; nay, we should step across the threshold and get into the common

thoroughfare of life, and if there are any souls there that are saying, "I would see Jesus," we should bring them, to the best of our knowledge, to the place where Jesus is the one subject, the only, the eternal light. I wish some professing Christians would drop either their Christianity or their profession of it; they are doing such mischief, unconsciously and unintentionally, to the cause, the Cross, the kingdom of Jesus. They think that kingdom is a set of little moulds, small squares, little mottoes; not knowing that no house was ever built that can hold all the light. No soul, how gifted soever with wings of poesy and heart of valorous daring, has seen all the kingdom of God. There is a way which the eagle hath not seen, a path which the vulture's eye has not gazed upon.

Our Christianity needs widening and deepening; we have all the earth part of it, but we want the firmament. We have measured the earth, and mapped it, and sold it in colours to little children, and called it the book of geography, but who has mapped all the stellar spaces and all the universe, and is there any instrument, assuming it to be sensitive and living, that is more surprised night by night than the trembling telescope? It turns white with fear, it shakes because of unimagined magnitude. It is just so with the Christian cause: you cannot call him a Christian surely who attends a place of worship that is not kindred to your own? Then I should be ashamed of myself, and I should think there was something wrong about my own place of worship, if it could not take in all the other places of worship. God has no pet denomination; God has not said that He prefers one of His own great growths to another. God never hugs the oak or lays embracing arms around the cedar, saying that He cares nothing for other forests or plantations of other wood. The earth is the Lord's, and the earth, with its sea, is redeemed and blessed by Him who is no respecter of persons, or places, or names, or ceremonies. And now you really cannot suppose that these people are Christians who are performing all sorts of—you want to say, antics; I accept your vulgar phrase, for no other occurs to me at the moment. Yes, I can believe them all to

be better than I am. I get good in every church; wherever the Cross is spoken of I am at home; wherever men fold their fingers and press their palms together and look up into the infinite spaces and cry out for some living one, I am at home; I say, This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. But they may not be correct in their notions. No man was ever saved by correct notions. Man is more than a coat, man is more than a body. Man has a body, but he is a spirit. All this may be perverted by those who would pervert bread and water. We cannot always guard ourselves against the perverting spirit, it is a most mischievous and uncontrollable spirit; we must not therefore give way to those who would shut us up to our own little nutshell notions and say that there is nothing beyond. Listen to this kernel: "This is the right place, and there is no other place right, and people that are talking about light and suns and stars and stellar spaces and all these polysyllabic delusions are all wrong." Who is the speaker? The kernel in the shell, the nutshell. Brethren, are we going to accept the lead of such small spirits? or are we going to say, Away to the high mountain, the mountains of myrrh and the hills of frankincense! God has still more light, and we must find it, because to seek it is to obey an impulse divine.

Some seek Christ as an ideal. Ideal is the favourite word of the ecclesiastical hour; in fact, it is the idol-word of the political hour as well. Some seek Christ as an ideal, a novelty in poetry, a variety in intellectual life. Jesus Christ is enrolled and honoured and invited to a very high place in the pantheon, and He is told that this seat, this throne of ivory, is His own. He is regarded as an ideal. What did the angel say? He spoke other language, he spoke in accordance with tragic facts; the air was still hot with the terrible tragedy, and the angel caught its spirit and expressed it in a word. He said, "I know ye seek Jesus"—yes, but what Jesus? the ideal, poetic, transcendental Jesus? No—"I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified." That is His title; do not abbreviate it, do not corrupt it by excision; it will bleed to death if you

do not give the full style, title, and address of the Son of God. "Jesus, which was crucified"—the Man in whose palms the nails were driven and on whose brow the thorns were enwreathed; I know the Christ you are seeking; you know Him by blood-marks. That is the Christ we have too much forgotten. We are admirers, but not believers. We have said, Jesus certainly was the loveliest character; He spake beautiful words, He must have been a sweet, gentle creature, a sort of woman-man, with much of His mother in Him; there was no bitterness, no virus in that beautiful life. That talk goes for nothing. What Jesus Christ came to do was to seek and to save that which was lost. He came to save the world; He gave Himself for us. Drop your admiration, and get back to living faith in Him who was crucified. Crucifixion meant redemption. On the one side the crucifixion was a Jew's murder; on the other, a divine expiation, a new illumination of the will of God, a grand interpretation of the purpose of the creation of human nature.

Then there comes into the heart a double experience of fear and great joy. We read about this in the eighth verse:—"They departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy." The fear was not servile, the fear was not kindred to the fear that shook the trembling and astounded keepers of the tomb. This great joy was shaded by a kindred fear. There is no joy worth having that has not a shadow upon it. Melancholy has a great ministry to fulfil in the education of the soul. What we owe to the twilight, what we owe to the darkness that is just dark enough to show us the shining stars, what we owe to those ministries that quell our ambition and subdue our anger, and make a mock of our accumulated and supposedly inexhaustible wealth. Many a man who looks sad, many a man who is pitied by the fool, who thinks life is laughter, is enjoying the deepest, closest, sweetest communion with things unseen. To many people life is a giggle; they think the evening is dull if it spill not over with foolish laughter and gibe that has no sense in it. Silence may be the supreme eloquence, and a pathetic look of lonesomeness and heartbreak may have under it the most tender and

thrilling experience of the nearness and majesty of God.

Now what have we come to seek? We have come this noonday in the middle of the week, in the middle of the City of London, what for, what to seek? If we have come for anything else than to seek Jesus we will not find Him; we mock Him. This is His house, every church is Christ's house. "In this place is one greater than the temple" is the motto I once thought of placing in the vestibule. That expresses my whole thought in relation to the church. As the tabernacle was built for the Ark, so every house like this was built for the Book, the Bible; and the house is empty until we open the Bible, and the open Bible constitutes the sanctuary because the open Bible means God, man, sin, grace, Cross, Crown, and the whole idea, the eternal poetry of heaven, in its purity and its truth.

Benediction.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God our heavenly Father, the fellowship and comfort of the Holy Ghost, abide with us until in a new and brighter sense we see Jesus—Jesus Crucified. Amen.

Prayer.

WE would obey Thy call, O Lord of heaven and earth, and arise, shine, for Thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon us. We would see glory upon glory, morning upon morning, and one light following the other until the very heavens appear to be opened. Oh that we might see light, that we might feel its warmth, and answer its silent music! We bless Thee for the mercies of the week, for the comfort of the morning, for the rest of this sweet Sabbath day; all are Thy gifts through Jesus Christ our Lord. We see Thee in them, we worship Thee under their spell; Thou art our God, and we know it, our fathers' God, and we recall it with delight. All history is Thine; Thou hast made the way of man upon the earth; notwithstanding his perversity and wickedness, Thou hast made him Thy child, Thy son, and Thou wilt mightily redeem him from his sin. May we rest in these great truths, and find comfort in them, and abandon all that is unworthy of us. Oh that we might see the way of the Lord amid the confusions of the world; oh that we might know there is a straight line driven through all the concerns of life, and that when man apparently has his will most he has it least, and the Lord reigneth and His throne is established through all generations. Enable us to find our rest and comfort in these great words; may we see that all things are of God, may we see that we know God only through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour and Mediator, whose blood speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. The Lord enable us to follow the Saviour, to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth; then shall we find rest unto our souls and great delight.

We pray for our country. God save the King, and the Parliament, and all who direct and lead our national sentiment. The Lord be with all men of business, all statesmen, leaders, and all who ought to set examples to the people at home and throughout the country and throughout the world. The Lord keep us in the time of war and battle and severe struggle; whilst we hate the war may we love the peace which it brings, and anticipate it with grateful delight. The Lord have mercy upon us in all capacities, as men, women, children, as sufferers and needy ones, as they who need great consolation in the time of affliction; the Lord look also upon those who have disease and difficulty and sorrow at home.

The Lord listen to those who plead that they may be forgiven for great sin. The Lord hear our public prayer, and may we be answered at all points and in all ways according to the will of the Lord. Bless these young people with the spirit of love; may they help the world's progress, may they love the Saviour and show forth the glory of His example. Be with those men of business whose life is a continual anxiety, a gnawing at the heart day by day, who plan much and effect little; the Lord give them patience of spirit and good temper of heart. Be with all who are appointed to die; may they die standing, triumphing in the Lord, and hiding under the folds of the banner of the Cross.

The Lord hear us, and multiply His grace towards us, and comfort our lives exceedingly. And to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, whom we adore as one God, be glory for evermore. Amen.

CLXXI.

THY GOD THY GLORY.

"*Thy God thy glory.*"—ISAIAH lx. 19.

THIS is the end; this is the final meaning; this is the upshot. We wanted to know how things would terminate, and the prophet tells us, and the apostle tells us, and they both say, God shall be all in all. The prophet saw it from afar. We need men who can see the morning; most of us can see and feel the night. There were men in the old, old time whose face was warmed by the morning beam. They persisted because God was with them. God said, Cry aloud, spare not, and tell the world that the morning is coming. We need these morning singers, people who have great sweet words to say when appearances are against them and all the heavens appear to crush them down. Some of us have moods, we see light now and then, we have good times; but the prophet saw the morning afar off, and spake of it according to the Spirit of God.

This chapter is full of light if you will read it through. "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." It is a chapter of chapters. It is in some respects the greatest chapter in all human history; and it is all based on Christ, Christ's priesthood, Christ's kingship, Christ's throne. Never forget that there are many chapters in the prophets which have an intermediate fulfilment, but they have their fulness of meaning in Christ. We do not deny that many a chapter relates to some intermediate ruler, potentate, mighty man; but such chapters are fulfilled only when we get to Bethlehem. The framework remains, but there is no need for it; the old things are about us, but in a most perishing condition. "The sun shall be no more thy light by day." Do you say so? Yes. The moon shall no more give her light by night. They are both dismissed from service. But they will still be there? Yes, they will still be there. The great light that alone can enlighten man is the light upon the soul, on the life, on the heart. I do not like to think of the dear old sun and the sweet calm moon being displaced; but they will be; all material things must stand back that the moral, the spiritual, the ideal, and the Divine may come forward, and show that they were the things which sun and moon and stars meant in the centuries far gone. That is a new meaning, say you, but it is a growing meaning, a natural and sequential meaning; there is logic in all such disposition. And we too shall go away and be no more seen, but we shall in other planets or places, in God's own mysterious way, develop and shine and complete ourselves in other and better conditions.

The point that I wish to fix attention upon is, that the end of all things is God. We must end where we began; the last note and the first must melt into one burst of music. The apostle says the end of all things is God; Isaiah says thy God shall be thy glory; and all through there is a feeling that Alpha is Omega, that Omega has in it Alpha, and the purposes of God are one. How this rebukes our love of detail and our mental confusion, and our spiritual panic and fear. It is very, very distressing to see how panic-struck the Church is because some fool has spoken against God. God can afford to be spoken

against, to be smitten, to be neglected, to be disregarded; but still, all His purposes move together in one grand movement, and they will be brought to a glorious and satisfying conclusion.

"Thy God thy glory." It might have been so from the first; God meant it, but man turned away from God. Then came the promise, and from that point God has been working to bring man back again into His movement. Consider that things were not done to-day and to-morrow; consider that God, having uttered a purpose and revealed a plan, will keep to it till the end. The centuries will die, and be as white ghosts on the fields of time, but God's eternity quietly, calmly, majestically, goes on. I suppose that little natures must have their fevered hours, their little times of fret and storm and fear; I suppose it must be natural, but it is wrong. What, are we to be indifferent to all the signs that seem to be fighting against the kingdom of God? No, but you are to bring God more prominently into view, to rest upon His word; He Himself says that is the argument. After having uttered the grandest promises that can be uttered or imagined, the prophets always conclude with this as the proof: "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Don't you attempt to improve the word of the Lord. There has gone forth a voice saying it shall be done; why cannot you be restful, why cannot you be assured that God will work out His great problem, cost what it may? Man is now on the right line, and he will ascend until he stands upon the hill of the Lord; he will go up until he passes sun and moon and stars, and the clouds are under his feet, up to the light, and to God's holy mountain, and none can keep him back. Why do you not believe it, and rest in it, and take cheer from it? for you, with all your vexations and anxieties and trepidations, are involved in this holy and delightsome promise. Poor man! I see that your head is aching because the devil seems to be getting the better of the Almighty. What irrational talk, what foolish palaver! And you are wondering how things will eventuate. They will eventuate in God. You assume that everything is at risk, is held on hazard,

and you cannot tell how a thing will culminate; you say that you are greatly distressed about the signs of the times; you have no need to be; let the signs of the times alone; only you correctly interpret them in God, and let them lie within the sweep of His omnipotence. What a sorry and miserable place it would be if we were always to be under the influence of the fears of men. Have you no sanctuary—no place on the hilltops, into which you can continually resort? Have you no little chamber-door in the rock through which you can pass and commune with God? You live on the surface, you live from hand to mouth—have you no security that is impregnable, no armour that is invulnerable? I want thus, you see, to bring us back to God, to God in Christ, to God in truth, to God in history, to God as He is to be measured by centuries, and not as He is to be criticised in days.

"Thy God thy glory." It might always have been so, but it was not so. What happened? Sin happened, and it will take God many a century to get sin out of the universe, but it shall go. God showed man the way back to Himself, but it is of grace, not of works, or discovery, or invention, or human plan; the way back to God is the very wonder of love. You will say, "Is it not so that we have to find our way back to Christ?" Yes, intermediately; the way back is to God. We have known Christ after the flesh, yet know we Him no more after the flesh; then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered the kingdom to God and His Father, and God shall be all in all. That is the great Christian prophecy and promise. Jesus Christ in His incarnation was here for a moment or two, He showed us manhood at its best, Godhood at its lowest: great is the mystery of godliness. Jesus, being weary, His face wan, sat thus on the well. Jesus, being weary, was asleep in the hinder part of the vessel. He had His moments of weariness; blessed be God, He had moments in which He was like ourselves—weary, hungered, mortal. Then He had morning moments. The disciples had a preliminary but most brilliant morning on the mountain once; His flesh did shine, His clothes were filled with light, everything about Him was light—supernatural, wonderful.

There we had Him at His best; in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. We have to take all these points into view; they make one grand truth; we have to receive it in sections, parts, parcels, as the case may be, but he is the wise scribe who can gather them all together, and show them in their blazing, radiant unity.

"Thy God thy glory." He will never be less than God; He will be on the throne for ever and ever, and He will be the glory of man. What has God done to recover man's apostasy, to bring him into right relation to himself? He has sent him a Saviour, Christ the Lord; that Saviour has come to seek you and me, to seek the whole human race. He speaks to every man in his own tongue wherein he was born. He adapts Himself, He reincarnates Himself, He will be to us what we can be to Him, that He may raise us up into His own personality and majesty. He is determined to win; there cannot be two Gods. He has set to His seal that the world is His, and He will redeem it, and has redeemed it with blood more precious than gold. That had a great meaning, that whole life of Christ, and that sacred Cross, that wondrous tree. What does God mean to be? He means to be Conqueror, He means to trample all the evil under His feet. What we see should not miserably agitate us; God sees more than we do, and He has told us not to be afraid, not to shrink back as those who have seen ghastly sights, but to hold on. "He that endureth unto the end shall be saved." Men cannot get rid of Christ. They may omit Him from their prayers, but He makes the prayer prevail if it is good; without Him there is no prayer.

You cannot re-arrange the apparatus of the universe, and that apparatus is an apparatus of mediation. We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. They have put up many paper Christs; many false Christs have gone out into the world. I am glad of it; it shows that man must have a Christ, as man must have a God. He will receive by revelation the true Deity, or he will write a revelation of his own, but Deity in some shape he must have. Not only has He sent a Saviour, but He has announced a Gospel and He has created an altar. This Gospel,

though the deepest of all mysteries, admits of announcement. There are many great mysteries that have not yet been brought into the region of language, but Jesus Christ has struggled into the language, into all languages. That is something gained. What is its meaning, its deep, subtle, far-reaching meaning? And He will find His way through language into the mind, into the heart, into the whole life, to purify and elevate, until it is as gold refined. If you have a gospel that cannot be spoken in my mother tongue, it is of no use to me; you must speak it in the shortest words, and talk it over to me by the fireside and the roadside, and under the tree, and by the well, and the river and the sea; and you must so talk it as to charm me away from all other fascinations.

"Thy God thy glory." Do not imagine that we can easily get to the end; through much tribulation we must enter every kingdom that is worth entering—how much more in entering into the kingdom of God! And make of the passage what you like, degrade it, you cannot take all the poetry out of it—"These are they which washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." That is a secret meaning, a sacred meaning, a practicable and intelligent meaning, and until we get at that meaning we have not yet begun the great Gospel way. Do not forget, if you please, that we are at the beginning. But only at the beginning after twenty centuries? Twenty centuries are nothing. If I could find a flaw in the Gospel it would be that even on its human side it is only twenty centuries old. Twenty centuries are but a drop in the bucket. As a dream when one awaketh, so is all measurable time. That is God's way, we cannot alter it; it is His way in matter, in geology, in all the makings of things that are seen. And why this measurement of time? There is no such thing; it is we who measure by time; again and again God has stooped over the slate and rubbed the calculation out; He has said, You are wrong; a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years; your arithmetic is at fault, abolish it, erase it.

You see, therefore, that I take a hopeful view of

things, although sometimes appearances are against this view, but they are appearances only; they ap-pear, they crawl upward to the surface. They show all their phases, they are not Divine realities and abiding substances. Then how foolish is the argument of unbelief which wants to have everything explained on the spot, and within the palpitating moment. We have not given God field enough; we should have given Him more elbow-room. He will take it, and not until we see things from that point of view shall we be able to believe that His will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. "Thy God thy glory"—a recovered God, a reconciled God, a reconciled man, all things tending to unity, radiance, music; then God shall say, "It is finished!"

Benediction.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God our heavenly Father, the fellowship and comfort of the Holy Ghost, abide with us every hour, interpreting life and sorrow and duty, until our day is closed. Amen.

PASTORAL WORDS.

IS it impossible for a man, after having been anxious and thoughtful, after having worried himself to death in the amassing of a little property, is it impossible for him to take it out into the next world? Yes,—impossible! "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth nor rust doth not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Make your ground bring forth plentifully; be the best farmers in the neighbourhood; be successful in all kinds of business or profession; and, if you possibly can, rise to the very top of the line along which you are working. But all the while hold all these things loosely; hold them in a spirit of stewardship. Then you will hold them rightly, and when God says, "Let go!" it will be but a step into heaven. The only things we can carry out of this world are our thoughts, our feelings, our impulses, our desires —all the elements which make us spiritual men, and invest us with moral character. We take out of this world our moral and spiritual condition,—and as the tree falleth, so must it lie.

What, then, do I find wanting in the speech of the foolish man in the parable? I find no grateful heart in it all. The man never blessed his banquet in the name of God. Not a word do I hear to this effect: "God hath dealt bountifully with me: praise God from whom all blessings flow. He hath put all these things into my care; He hath entrusted me with all this large estate, that I may administer it in His name. Lord, teach me how to use it, so that not one crumb be wasted, but that the whole be so ordered and dispensed as to bring honour to Thy name, and satisfaction and gladness to Thy children that are round about me."

He doubles his enjoyment of worldly things who uses them gratefully; he drinks the best wine who drinks out of the goblet of thankfulness; he has most who gives most; and he grows most truly who, for Christ's sake, expends himself for the good of others most fully.

ORDER OF SERVICE.

SUNDAY MORNING, 24TH NOVEMBER, 1901.

Voluntary ... ... "Andante" ... ... *Bruce Steane*

Anthem 59 ... ... "O dayspring" ... ... *Stainer*

The Lord's Prayer.—*Field.*

Hymn 76 ... ... "Ye servants of God."

1st Lesson. Jer. xxiii. 5-8.

Chant 26 ... ... Psalm viii. ... ... *Battishill*

2nd Lesson. 2 Cor. v. 18-21.

Anthem ... ... "Hearken unto Me" ... ... *Sullivan*

Hearken unto Me, My people, and give ear unto Me, O My nation, for a law shall proceed from Me, and I will make My judgment to rest for a light of the people. My righteousness is near, My salvation is gone forth, and Mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon Me, and on Mine arm shall they trust. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; but My salvation shall be for ever, and My righteousness shall not be abolished.

ISAIAH li. 4, 5, 6.

Prayer.

Hymn 308 ... "O Jesus Christ, grow Thou in me."

Sermon.

Offertory and Solo:

Recit. and Air ... "Come, ye children" (*Prodigal Son*) *Sullivan*

Mr. WILLIAM A. SHEEN.

Hymn 376 ... "Dismiss me not Thy service, Lord."

Benediction and Threefold Amen.—*Gounod.*

Cornet Solo ... ... "The dream angel" ... *E. St. Quentin*

Mr. GEORGE HARLOW.

[*Thursday Morning, 5th December*, 1901.]

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, may we hear as men whose minds are moved by the Holy Spirit. May we hear well, may nothing escape us, may we have an ear for music! Surely Thy Word is music; the voice came from heaven, as did the Son of whom it spake. We are gathered together on this mount of Transfiguration; may we see Moses and Elias and Jesus, and hear great things which cannot be heard in the speech of man. We bless Thee for the religiousness of religion; we thank Thee for the quality of the message; by its quality we know its origin: Lord, help us to study Thy book with diligence and care, and with the utmost faithfulness as men who must one day give an account. We beseech Thee to hear us, Lord, in this day of doubting and the shaking of the Church, this day of unbelief and revel in mischief and in sin. They have taken away my Lord, I know not where they have laid Him; they have disputed Thy Book, and we know not where they have laid the revelation; they have encroached upon Thy sanctuary, and they have committed blasphemy at Thine altar. Good Lord, hear us, and have mercy upon us, and keep us from the same sin. Amen.

This service is held in this church every Thursday morning, beginning at twelve o'clock and ending at one. The offering that is taken at the close is taken for the poor, the needy, and those who are cold. Do you know what cold is? You are too well blanketed for that. The apostle never touched my sympathy more than when he said "in cold and nakedness." These men believed that the Bible was infallible, and they believed in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and it is all I can do—I am not sure that I am acting faithfully in doing it—it is all I can do to hold my tongue, when I see that there are men who tell the people that the Bible is not infallible, and who, silently and stealthily as it were, expunge from public worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. I am afraid I shall one day have to speak the truth, cost what it may. The apostle Paul would not have hesitated.

CLXXII.

WATER FROM THE FOUNTAIN.

"*Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.*"—2 PETER i. 20.

HE words really signify the instance of a man who is seeking the head of a river. He says, "Where does this river spring? I will follow it all the way until I come to what at least appears to be the river-head." It is the figure also of a man who would judge of the Scriptures not by their grammar, but by their quality. That is the critical point. Miss that and you miss all. He takes up the water as it were in an appointed vessel and says to himself, "This water is of such a quality that it must rise in the chalkfields, in the rocks away yonder. This is not spoiled water, it is spring water; I will follow it, and by its quality I will determine the weight that ought to be attached to it." This man, if we come to take to pieces his words to find their meaning, will be found to be going in search of origin, not of interpretation, or of interpretation only that he may verify the origin. That is a grand Bible lesson, if God will give us words.

Interpret—interpretation. To interpret is to unfold, disclose, to get at the quality of the thing interpreted; not to find out its meaning as an exercise in grammar, but to find from its quality where it came from. Is it of the earth earthy? Is it of the heavens heavenly? Settle this question not by grammar, but by quality of tone and meaning. That is a wonderful thing. The apostle sticks to that; he says, What is the quality of his speech? What is its spiritual quality or force? Settle that, and then you may ask the question, Whence did it come? Is this water of such a quality that you can account for it by earthly circumstances, or has it about it a taste, a savour, a quality, that destroys the theory of an earthly

origin? There we get down to the bedrock; there we get away from mean criticism, and all mere criticism, and all torture of the letter, grammatical, critical and the like; and by its quality, its substance, its rare fine flavour, we know that this wine grew in heavenly vineyards. That is how the case stands. Explanation may be true, exegesis may be correct, but if we do not go farther, and see that such words are of such quality as to separate them from all other words, we shall be ensnared on the road and be the victims of a superficial but most ambitious and finally destructive criticism. There are many grammatical Christians—I do not want them—there are many grammatical Christians who never get into the real meaning of Scripture. The Authorised Version cannot get you into the real meaning, nor the Revised Version; we would have both, and we value them both, and we accept them both as great prizes of learning, but after that? Ay, after that? We must, by the aid of the Spirit, by the lure of the Spirit, follow Him until we come to rivers to swim in. There the mere critic has no business, no right, no function. "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord" (Isa. liv. 13).

Now the idea of the passage is this: it is a very difficult passage, but this is the gist and pith of it: No prophecy is a dream of the prophet; in fact, the prophet has little or nothing to do with it; he is a mere instrument through which the revelation comes, and when he is out of his prophetic mood, he is conscious that great presences have passed before his vision, that great questions have been stated, and great visions have been seen. He is a mere instrument. The organ is not the music; it is but the instrument through which the music is expressed. I wonder if you follow me. No prophecy is of the prophet's origin; he has next to nothing to do with it; he is maddened by it, he is in a great ecstacy, in a great fury, he is a new man, he trembles in his weakness, he is in sore agony, and when he comes out of this vision of God he says, "What was it I said? what were these things which I heard, and which I endeavoured to express? Report my dream to me; it has unmanned my strength, and yet it has given me a new and powerful inspiration." That is what

preaching ought to be. Professor Jowett, of Balliol College, has given me a new sermon, a new Bible, a new harvest ground. How has he done that? By one grand pregnant sentence, which so many of us poor preachers forget, or we want the great man to say it first, and then we can chatter it after him. Many people can mumble a tune who cannot raise one. Professor Jowett says this: In interpreting an ancient author, the question is not what did he mean, but of what applications are his words capable to-day. It was light to me. A great rosy morning burned round me. I felt that he was the man to follow, and not the little creatures who say, "What does the text itself say as interpreted by the grammar, and by the lexicon, because the Bible is literature, and ought to be found out by literary apparatus?" Jowett comes to me and says: In reading an ancient author the question is not what he meant, but what would he have meant to-day, and of what applications are his statements capable this very morning? There is liberty for the preacher. Many people talk about reading meanings into texts. That is right; do not heed the people who warn you against that; if you are reading the right quality into the text read it more and more fully until it effloresces, and burns like a bush in which resides God. The late great master of Balliol! The preachers have been so blind to this; they have all been afraid of reading meanings into the apostles. That is what the apostles were for, and what the words of Christ are for, if you read meanings of the right quality with the right motive. We cannot tell how much the apostle meant to say; he did not know himself. If the apostle Paul were to come into our churches and heard his own texts preached from, he would not know they were his, and that would be no disadvantage. He did not know he had spoken across the ages, and that his poor weak voice fell in thunder among the centuries far ahead. We must not have a little Bible, a poor weazened little Bible; we must have a growing Bible, but growing from the right root, and under the guidance of the right husbandman.

Now see what flows from this interpretation of the text. First of all, the prophecy is not human literature. It is something more, it is a quantity beyond.

It leads me away and away, over fields and pastures, through forests and vineyards, further and further, until I lose it for a moment in heaven itself. We say of such and such a man, "How he stuck to his text!" I ask what his text was: was his text bigger than he thought it to be? was it a great word that had other words in it, deep implications, far-reaching suggestions, marvellous possibilities of speech and music, and did the man at last come to say, "Drop it! I have no more words, I have come to the ineffable, I am lost in a vision of ecstacy"? That would be preaching, when the prophet feels the mantle loosening on his shoulder, falling into immeasurable abysses of space, whilst he himself is caught up into wonderland and places that have no earthly speech. But there are men who insist upon the Bible being literature. I believe some people have counted the words, I am nearly certain that some people have counted the letters, and they have the words, and there they are before me in red and green and blue and yellow. The Bible is an immeasurable book; it begins, but never ends. Are you making this use of the Bible? Do you say, "It is literature, and being literature, it ought to be measured by the dictionary and the grammar?" What can they measure? They are poor instruments; they can go but a very little way in the interpretations of Divine visions and revelations. Know that your vision is right when it leads you into self-forgetfulness, self-sacrifice, and the very passion of devotion. Where are our passionate men to-day, men all fire, all heat, all earnestness? If the Bible were only literature, it would be, of course, measured by the lexicon and by the grammar; but it is not mere literature, but as I have already said, literature and something more, and what that something more is the Holy Ghost must teach us.

And then, secondly, this proposition that the Bible is not mere human literature is proved by its quality. There is none like it; I never tasted water like this. I know this Bible river by the quality of its waters, and its general content. Oh, read it to me, read it with the voice of your experience; let me hear in your reading the agony of your tears dropping on the

darkness of the night. I will tell you whether you are Bible-readers or Bible-chatterers. The Bible will stand this test by its quality, the quality of its revelation, the quality of its music, its whole quality,—literary, intellectual, spiritual, ecstatic, celestial; I shall know that I have got hold of no common book that can be broken into the equivalents of lexicon and grammar. A man does not necessarily know the prophecy because he knows the syntax. Have I not said before, here or elsewhere, that it is perfectly possible to parse a book and know nothing about it? The people that I am now condemning are parsers, men who know that there are eight or nine parts of speech, and who know them when they see them, but they do not know them when they see them in the Bible; they are still there, and are parts of speech, but are more than parts of speech; there is a fringe, an aureole, a wonder-star, as of the coming day. Can you understand "Paradise Lost" by parsing it? Never! You say, "Oh, I know every word of that, I used to parse that at dinner time when I was an apprentice; I know Milton's 'Paradise Lost' perfectly." You have not given any proof of it. To parse a book is not to receive it into the soul. The things that I have received most deeply into my heart are things that defy all grammar, syntax, parsing, and criticism. Have you ever seen a little child's letter? There was not one rule of grammar that letter did not violate, and you would not part with it for the world. It was a letter to the heart, a letter to answering love, it was precious because of its very weakness and imperfectness. I am much afraid that many people think they understand the Bible because they know Greek and Hebrew, and grammar and lexicon, and all the apparatus of what is called criticism. They may know all that—it is not to be despised, far from it—and yet they may know nothing about the Evangel of the Gospel. They say that the Old Testament does not contain anything that can be relied upon. Perhaps not to those who do not read it in the right spirit, but I am here to say that if it be read in the right spirit, Jesus is in every line of it. He began at Moses—He could not begin earlier—and He went all through psalm and prophet, and vision and parable, until the men who heard

Him found that they were burning in the heart. Some people read out of the Bible all its meaning, and they are likely to blame the vision of the seers who read into it what they imagine is foreign matter. My dear sirs, my brother preachers, we must get into the spirit, into the original poetry and thought of the Bible, before we can really understand it; and when I am there, I am in the secret places of the tabernacles of the Most High, and the waters of criticism good or bad never rise to that mighty, wondrous level. You strive after the spirit, and you need have no fear, and will have no fear, that the Bible has had its day. Salvation is not of grammar, but of sympathy. You do not suppose that the Lord God Almighty made salvation depend on a knowledge of dead languages? They have nothing to do with it; in the case of the penitent, the contrite, and the broken-hearted, God was not speaking in words, or He speaks to them in words that have other meanings, and further, and they see it and adore.

Am I therefore setting up ignorance? By no means; all ignorance is to be avoided; we are to get all the learning, instruction, and consolation of the letter we can, but after that and before that and in a sense independent of that, it is true that the Bible is within the Bible. You must beware of this spirit that says, "Unless you can read the original languages, you ought to hold your tongue on Biblical subjects." What is that but Popery, the worst Popery, because it does not assume the name of the Papacy? I say to every ploughman and hedgecutter, to every poor mother rocking her cradle and not knowing her own alphabet, you, all of you, can receive a revelation of God, the truth of the Spirit of God, and you can be made wise unto salvation without knowing any other language than your mother tongue, and that mother tongue very brokenly and imperfectly. If salvation were of letters, salvation is of works. How do you know Christ? "I know that I know Him." That is enough. The other may come, it may be a valuable acquisition, it may be a great help to you; do not understand that I am disputing these initial things, but I want you to get at the further thought,

beyond which there is no other, that into the heart God Himself pours the spirit of the Bible, the spirit of instruction, the spirit of sympathy with all spiritual things.

This is the problem: Given such prophecy, to know whence it came? I return to my first figure, which is a figure grammatical as well as spiritual. Given such prophecy, to know where the river began. Oh, they tell me about the Maccabean period and the Exile and the post-Exilic, and the first Psalter, and the second Psalter. They are all working in cellars, they are not speaking to me, to my poor burdened aching heart. These things may be of great importance in their place, but let them be kept in their place. I want to know the spiritual meaning, the inner harmony, the wondrous converse of God with the spirit of man. The text explains all this; it covers all the ground; there is no other answer. It says this, "But holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." That is a mystery. It is. Can it be explained? Not fully. Holy men of God spake without knowing all they said. They said, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful." I say, you ecstatic madman, what are you talking about? He says, "I am not talking, I am laying myself down at the foot of the Almighty, and am but a poor instrument through which God is speaking." I do not want to know what David said, I want to know what the Spirit meant by the mouth of David. We must not say, David did not write this Psalm, or David could not have written this Psalm; David was dead five hundred years before that was done. I am not content with these things, I want to know what the Lord, the Holy Spirit, meant by these words, when He spake them through the mouth of the Prophet, and no man can help me unless he be in that same spirit.

Now what is true of the Book, I may say in a final sentence or two, is true of the manhood which the Bible makes. It is the work of the Spirit, the mysterious subtle work of the Holy Ghost, the very fine

and persistent work of the third Person of the ever-blessed Trinity; He works on the heart and on the conscience and in the imagination, and through the will, and through all the ways and avenues of human development and strength. Lord, take not Thy Holy Spirit from me; take health, and children, and gold, but take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. What is true of the Book is true of the miracles. "*These* miracles that Thou doest"—put the emphasis upon the word "these" as indicating a quality. "Never man spake like this Man." That is true, and the people who reported that did not know fully what they were saying. Never man had this quality, this aristocracy, this peculiar resonant, quiet, lofty accent in his voice. "He spake unto them as one having authority, not as the scribes." Blessed Saviour, continue to speak to us, and thus give us the old matter in new, broader, and brighter forms!

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the triune God, be with us when we read the Scriptures, and help us when we endeavour to apply them.

Prayer.

LORD, teach us how to pray; graciously grant unto us the prayerful spirit, give us the name which makes prayer prevail, and the right to use that name, the name of Jesus Christ, blessed Lord, blessed Saviour. We have much to say unto Thee, our Father, and we know not how rightly to say it. We want to praise Thee for Thy mercies, though they are contradicted with so much violence by providences we cannot understand. Thou settest up, and Thou dost throw down. Thou givest the nations health, and yet Thou makest the nations dig their own graves; it is a great contradiction, and an infinite mystery. Give us strength to hold on, to believe, to stand fast in the time of darkness. We want to praise Thy goodness; it is marvellous lovingkindness. Sometimes we think Thou art our Father; sometimes we are tempted to believe that Thou meanest our destruction: it is so heartrending and so full of misery. We say, What shall we render unto the Lord for His benefits towards us? and ere we have concluded the sentence, we are beclouded and lost in the mystery of gloom. We have an altar in the house, and on it we have piled prayers that have never got to heaven. Lord, have mercy upon us, or our faith will go, and we shall be as other men, and Thy blessing shall not be on our tongue or on our lips. Lord, come to us! we cannot stand it much longer; our flesh gives way; the dust that is within us prevails over the deity. We would bless Thy name still for Thy kindness and Thy love during these many years; there is no more night than day in all the years that we have lived, and still the night presses heavily upon us and seems to be much more. Lord, have mercy upon us; Lord, pity us; it is not enough for us to know that our sins account for it all; we want to hear not of our sins, but of Thy mercy. God be merciful unto us sinners! God be merciful unto us Christians! We have told lies, we have turned our back upon the truth, we have borne false witness, we have said we could not do it and we have done it. God keep the children of dust! We want to say to Thee how sinful we are, more and more sinful; we sin with the light, and the light makes our sin the more sinful. We are frivolous and thoughtless, we hear Thy Word, and fall back again into the language of the market-place. We cannot steady our hearts in Thy grace; we

cannot for two moments together speak of Thy mercy; we dismiss it with a sigh, whereas we should prolong it into a psalm. Lord, have mercy upon us, and forgive us our manifold transgressions, and give us grace to be sober-minded for two moments at once. We want Thy guidance every day; the flesh is strong, the world is furious, and the devil is unsleeping. Oh, to tell the truth, to be honest men, to be transparent through and through: is it beyond the grace of Christ to work this miracle in us? Amen.

CLXXIII.

MAN SUCCEEDING MAN.

"*Reigned in his stead.*"—1 CHRON. i 44.

WE must get into the musical beat of these words before we can apply or attempt to understand them. "And when Jobab was dead, Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his stead. And when Husham was dead, Hadad the son of Bedad, which smote Midian in the field of Moab, reigned in his stead. And when Hadad was dead, Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his stead. And when Samlah was dead, Shaul of Rehoboth by the river reigned in his stead"—pushed them on, drove them down. There are plenty more to come: "And when Shaul was dead, Baal-hanan the son of Achbor reigned in his stead. And when Baal-hanan was dead, Hadad reigned in his stead"—because he was waiting for his shoes. That is the grim story. It is going on to-day.

There are men immediately behind us who are waiting for us to get on, and to go, and finish our prophecy, our commerce, our function, whatever it may be. The breath of the next man is hot on my neck. Do not lose the spiritual impulse and spiritual edification of such texts as these by calling them commonplace. Do not say that we are uttering trite sayings when we say that man lives that he

may die, and dies, says the Christian faith, that he may live. We spoil the estate of God and the inheritance of Zion when we say that all these things are the commonplaces of life. Bread is the commonplace of the table, but you cannot on that account afford to dispense with it. Bread is the real food; the other foods are but decorations: this is the true bread that cometh down from heaven. Here is the continual flow of human life, on and on the stream goes, always going, more to come; the river is always there, though the particles of that river have passed on; it is only yours whilst it is there, and it is always there. This is a mystery, but the beginning also of a poem. The next man is always ready; perhaps he is too ready, he is impatient to ascend a throne which he will have soon to leave. But "all men think all men mortal but themselves"; they are never going to die, and they are dying whilst they make the empty boast. You say, "Where will the next man come from?" He is ready, he is waiting for the place, for your place at the counter, in the counting-house, in the factory; he thinks you have been there long enough; he knows that he is better fitted for the place than you are. There is no dearth of claimants; whether the claimants are the right ones we may not have time to stay and determine. There are a dozen men waiting for your situation at this moment; they would take it to begin with at half the money. There are fifty men who think they could make better use of your position than you can; they say so behind your back. There are a hundred men ready to ascend this pulpit the moment I leave it, and they think they could do much better.

Succession is an argument for Providence. We did not know where the men were to come from, but God knew. God says, I know of seven thousand men who have not kissed the lips of Baal, who have turned their back in scorn upon him, and I will call them up. The reserves of God are twenty thousand and thousands of thousands. It is wonderful how God conducts things; it is marvellous where His men come from to conduct the business, the commerce, the civilisation, the nationalisation of the world—just

so many, no more, not overcrowded, except in some congested districts for which I blame man alone. The earth will presently be all corpse-dust; we shall build our houses on the rotting bones of men. The earth yet does not seem to be full or overcrowded, but what may it not be when five hundred thousand more centuries have rained their rains upon it? Stop! We must not over-think the time; we should go mad if we thought about thousands of centuries; it is because we can gabble about them and not think of them, we do not realise them or we should go mad. Is there a man here who believes in hell-fire, and yet jokes, trifles with the time? You could not bear it, your poor brain would reel if you thought about that fire too much. And the same consequence would happen if we thought too prolonged a time about heaven or space or duration. We are safe only within our own limitations. We must leave God to govern the universe and to find His men, and the way in which He has always found them is, I say, an argument for Providence. He says in effect, Now it is your turn to go on; to-morrow the king will die, and you must succeed him; to-morrow the member of Parliament will cease, and you must spring forward to his place; on the morrow the preacher will be listened for, waited for, and will not come, you must be ready to stand in his footprints; that is the way in which things are governed—a hot way, a feverish way, if we mistake it and miscalculate it, yet all solemn and proportional and musical if we take it in the right spirit and wait for the Lord.

There is no guarantee that the next man will be better than the last, but he is on the way to a better. The line of God's world is a line of progress, upwardness; here and there he may have depressions, but they are depressions on the highlands, they are not depressions from the common level. In God's way the undulations are on the highland country, and they lead to hill after hill, conquest after conquest: haply one fool may be a misfit, but he will not spoil the succession. Do understand, if you please, that there is an organic nerve, an organic line, a uniting upward line that solitary instances cannot change. Do not fix your mind upon some poor solitary king, and

laugh at him as head of the Church so-called. He is not the head of the Church; that poor rickety, wobbling, uncertain thing called a king is not the head of the Church, but the King may be the real king, the ideal king, and when we say "God save the King!" we mean more than any one man's name, we go into the sanctuary of history, and the purpose of God in the development of nations. It does not follow, I repeat, that a man's successor shall be better than he was, though that successor may be his own son. We have no control over sons; they are better, they are worse, they are incalculable, they are glorious, according to the scheme and purpose of God. No man can leave more than his own example, but what an inheritance that may be! A man cannot leave his own intellectual attainments. What a pity it is that we cannot go on from the great man to the greater! Poor man, white-faced man, soon to be an inanimate body, a corpse, canst thou not leave me thy Latin? Oh, leave me thy knowledge of Greek! It is all I want; I do not ask for money, but I ask thee to leave me one of thy many attainments. It cannot be, it cannot, must not be. That is hard. So it seems, no doubt, but it cannot be. Every man must gather his own learning, make his own attainments, stand on his own feet. That is individuality driven to extreme. So it is, no doubt, but that is the way the world is kept up, and the chariot is made to roll on. It is a lawful ambition to make it very hard for any man to follow. That is what the late illustrious and ever-beloved Queen did; she made it hard for the King. She was so wise in her girlhood, in her womanhood, and in her old age; so genial, yet so firm; she saw the wants of the State, she had that comprehensive eye which sees the whole, and not only the part, that she has made it very hard for any number of kings to follow her in the rule of the Empire. So it may be in our respective cases. Make it hard for your son to beat you; bring him to his senses, so that he will some day say, "That old father of mine was a better man than I thought he was; I wish I had known him better; I took him as a matter of course, but there was no matter of course about him; he was a thinker and a seer; he

has made it very hard for me to come after." And you young men should be prepared to follow great men, great thinkers, far-sighted merchants, dealers, monied people; you should study the markets, the times, the papers, the signs that are round about you, and do not always be plucking a bone your father worked for. That has now got well down into your mind, I hope,—may it do you good!

This law of succession holds good on a wider scale. It is a great law, with great meanings, wide applications, it holds good in the Christian life. These men mentioned in the text may have come to the throne by right of blood, by claim of birth, or genealogy—the very poorest of all claims; but in the Christian life men succeed not by line of inheritance and breeding, but by the line of faith and virtue and nobleness. Who will be baptised for the dead? There are many vacancies now. Who will come and fill them? I go into many a city and say, "Where are the old folks?" "They are all dead." "Where are their sons?" "Ah! the sons are here, but they are milksops." "You do not tell me that they are not worthy of the great fathers they had?" "They are not. How far their fathers were to blame, I do not know," is the cry. "But it would take any six of them to make the old man." I wish the old man had been here to listen to that speech of theirs; he did not know that he was so much as they make him out to be, but he was. "And where did his power lie?" "We cannot tell; it lay everywhere, here and there and beyond and back again. Power is not a dictionary word, it is a very subtle quantity, and the old man had it." "Well, was he born to it?" "No, he learnt to write with a skewer at a night-school on a sand-board; he never spoke a grammatical sentence, but there was enough of him to cut up six sons out of, and a good deal would have been left of him." Some houses are ten storeys high; you can cut five away and leave an important dwelling-place. Who will take up the dead man's sword in the Church? Who will succeed Chalmers in New Guinea? A king of men. I watched him from the corner of this pulpit as he stood here pleading for the missionary cause

in words of fire. Did the people hear him? No, they would have heard him, but they were at the play, at the concert, and Chalmers was a voice crying in the wilderness. Has the race of heroes run itself out? Are we to be content with the halt and the blind and the maimed? Have we to put the very smallest of our fry into the front, and say, "You can do the Church work, and we will go to the play"? Has it come to this? Is my Lord still deserted? Is that crown of thorns never to be taken from His temples?

"Reigned in his stead . . . reigned in his stead . . . reigned in his stead." And so the history flows on as a matter of course. What is the great application of all this? I will tell you. What have I been aiming at in this long introduction? I will tell you. There is a King in whose stead no monach shall reign. Name him. I will: Jesus Christ. It will never be said in the annals of history, "And Jesus died, and somebody reigned in His stead." O friends and comrades, I call you to the throne of Jesus; but in coming to His throne we must tarry at His Cross? Will you come? Will you do some work for Jesus Christ? Will you be religiously and humbly proud of your King? Or will you send a message after Him, saying, "We will not have this Man to reign over us"? The Christian religion is everything, or it is nothing; it is a consuming passion, or it is a dead cold. Will you make up your minds upon this most important point, and give my heart the encouragement to believe that even yet there are men who love the Saviour, love Him supremely, love Him to the dying point if necessary?

They are making sad havoc in the Church now, are unbelievers and indifferent men. I have more dread of indifference than I have of blasphemy. When a man blasphemes he is alive, but a man can be indifferent and be living in a certain social sense and yet be dead in his heart. Do let us be earnest about this Christian matter. If Christ died for us we are not our own, we are bought with a price. Let us answer that responsibility or let us leave it. The men who leave the Church, have nothing further to

do with it, and wash their hands of the whole idea ecclesiastical, occupy a position that can be understood; at least, there is a grim clearness about their case; but men that hang on to the church and go to the church because it has been their custom, and who really do not care much what becomes of the church, whether it is Trinitarian or Unitarian, or anything else, who do not trouble their heads, as they call their most prominent feature, about that sort of thing—O let us give it all up rather than do that. Let there be a reduction of the multitudes to three or six, but let them be real men, downright earnest men, not studying the pedants, or following the fashion, but consecrated, burning souls. They are saying now in various parts that the Bible is not infallible. The men who built the church or the college, as the case may be, believed it was infallible, or they would never have built it. Mind what you are saying! They believed that the Bible was the Book of God in the most true sense; they believed that the Cross of Christ is the salvation of the world, not on the ground of some unaccountable verbs and inexplicable theory, but in some real, true, and ever-appealing sense. There must be a controversy about this. I do not want to begin it, but somebody must begin it, and if they do not begin it I shall go into it. The thing has come to be a real, strenuous battle. Who is on the Lord's side will be decided not according to mere words and professions, and the man will not be allowed to say that the Bible is the Word of God "in a very real sense" without telling us what that very real sense is; because the people who gave him a roof over his head believed one thing, and believed it definitely. It must not be thought that any man will do for the succession. There is a line of consistency, it is a line of progress, but it is not a line of contradiction. May the Lord impose the burden upon some younger man, but if I have to bear it, I will say to the Lord, "Here I am, send me!"

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the triune God, be with us in the defence and exposition and experience of the Gospel, until we close our eyes on the things of time. Amen.

PASTORAL WORDS.

JESUS CHRIST will come again. He has but taken His journey into a far country. He was always speaking of His own coming. His going away seemed to be a kind of returning. He said: "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send Him unto you": "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself": "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him": "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh": He will come as a thief in the night—suddenly, almost unexpectedly: "In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh." That is the only mood in which we can truly live.

Whilst we live in an historical Christ, we also live in a Christ that is yet to complete His advent by another descent. Various theories about that descent have been formed. There is a physical or personal coming; there is another kind of coming—to my own mind richer, larger, and truer—the continual coming of Christ, in new ideas, new impressions, the awakening of higher aspirations, the satisfaction of the soul's hunger; and that wondrous coming which men call Death.

Think not of your Beloved as away in any sense of distance that signifies separation, coldness, and cessation of fellowship: He is away preparing for us; He will come again. He comes every day to the soul that waits for Him. He can so come to the spirit that any bodily coming would be held in contempt in comparison: He can so fill the heart, and satisfy and gladden it, that any vision of His personality by the bodily eyes would be unworthy of the occasion. He enlarges our manhood; He clears our spiritual horizon; He gives us to feel that He can come better spiritually than physically and literally.

At the same time, let us hold any theory of Christ's coming we please which draws us towards Him, which impels us to duty and sacrifice, which creates in us a larger manhood and completer beneficence; but whatever the coming may be there must be in it a spiritual realisation transcending all language in its expression, and all sensuous representation as to its grandeur and value.

ORDER OF SERVICE.

SUNDAY MORNING, 8TH DECEMBER, 1901.

Voluntary ... ... "Andante" ... ... *Stainer*

Anthem 15 ... ... "O Lord, my strength" ... ... *Auber*

The Lord's Prayer.—*Field.*

Hymn 14 ... "Give to our God immortal praise."

1st Lesson. Isaiah xl. 3-5.

Chant 123 ... ... Prov. iii. 5-7, 9-18; ii. 2-11 ... ... *Crotch*

2nd Lesson. Mark i. 1-8.

Anthem ... ... "O Lord, our Governour" ... ... *Gadsby*

O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth! who hast set Thy glory above the heavens What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

PSALM viii. 1, 4, 5.

Prayer.

Hymn 237 ... "Welcome, welcome! sinner, hear."

Sermon.

Offertory and Solo:

Recit. ... ... "Then shall the eyes" ... ... } *(Messiah)*
Air ... ... "He shall feed His flock" ... .. } *Handel*

Miss LUCIE JOHNSTONE.

Hymn 181 ... "Great God, what do I see and hear?"

Benediction and Threefold Amen.—*Gounod.*

Voluntary ... ... "Postlude" ... ... *Fletcher*

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we thank Thee for the kingdom of heaven amongst men. It is a beginning, it is a dawn, it is a promise. Sometimes we feel it very near; we feel its warmth in our hearts, its gladness in our spirits, its young life in our very pulses and blood. Sometimes it seems to be a long way from us; then we are in darkness, and we sit in night, and we are as those who grope for the gates of the morning and cannot find them. Through all this experience Thou art leading us, now in high exaltation of mind, now in distressing depression of spirit; now in a fine, sunny, broadening day, and now in showers of rain which we do not receive as showers of blessing. But it is God's way; Thy will be done; rebuke us, chide us, impoverish us, take away our health from us, but take not Thy Holy Spirit from us. The Lord hear us, when we ask for a forgiving heart, for a noble spirit, for likeness unto the Son of God. We are poor and feeble and needy, but the Lord is rich in grace and abundant in mercy, and He will not say nay to the prayer of faith. Stablish our young souls in Christ; give unto our own spirits release from weariness and pain; be with our merchantmen that they may do their business in an honest spirit as in the open day; comfort our sick with a Father's blessing and a physician's smile, and raise them up to health again or to the better health of immortality. The Lord in heaven hear us. We bow at the Cross, we fall down before the bleeding Christ; each is saying—oh, hear him and answer him—

> "In my hand no price I bring,
> Simply to Thy cross I cling."

If the Lord be with us, then shall it be summer and triumph and peace. Amen.

CLXXIV.

THE LAW OF EQUIVALENTS.

"*For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise*——."—ECCLES. vii. 22.

THE meaning would seem to be: Take no heed of tale-bearing; do not attach too much importance to words that are spoken in secret and not intended for thine own ear. Do not listen to servants talking about thee in the kitchen; do not be distressed by what men say about thee in the streets; do not judge thyself too much by thy nickname: "for oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise——."

This is the law of equivalents. Men hear what they have spoken. If you have sowed the air with pearly words, you will reap a pearly harvest. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Do not play the eavesdropper. Otherwise thou shalt hear no good of thyself. If thy servants curse thee, or speak unkindly of thee, think, for oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed them. What is this Spirit that hears all our words and sends them back to us by unexpected ministers? How haughty we are when we hear the servants curse us, how we stand upon our rights and our dignity; we say, Self-respect cannot bear this. Wait, for thou thyself knowest that this is all right. Do not get into a feverish temper; do not stand upon your dignity, there is none to stand on: for oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast done just the same thing. But if that is to check us, what is to become of conversation? If we are to hear in the denunciations of others an echo of our own cursings, life has come to a pretty pass, but that is it, that is the law; it is a just and gracious law; it operates in two different directions. The way

of the Lord is equal. If thou dost hear the poor bless thee; if they do secretly as it were kiss thine open hand, why shouldest thou be amazed? for thou thyself also oftentimes helped the poor and the needy, and showed the stranger his way and gave the tired man a night's pillowing. Is that the law? Yes, it operates in two ways, both ways. You not only hear your nickname called by your servants, who look so demure and hand you all you eat with a countenance unbroken by a smile; you think they are deaf and dumb; they are not, and when they call you by some shocking and disgusting, but characteristic nickname, you feel offended. But why should you? For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise—— But what is to become of conversation? It will be killed; there will be nothing to talk about if we cannot talk about each other's faults. A text like this would strike the world dumb. I wish it would.

Now there is another application, and it is, that what we ourselves have done we should not condemn in others. Christianity is in this section of the Scriptures very practical. There is no hymn-singing down these dales, it is a cruel east wind that blows in our face. It may not be, after all; it may be but a preliminary judgment, it may be but a chastening of the spirit. We should heed all these things and be wise. Have you been guilty of any of the great vices? You would not be so vulgar. Have you been guilty of robbery? "How can you address such a question to a Christian congregation?" Well, I can do so because I first address it to a Christian preacher. Have I been guilty of robbery? Not in the magistrate's sense; no, I could dine with the magistrate, I could laugh at his jokes, and give him half a dozen more to be going on with. But have I been guilty of robbery? Well, perhaps I was at one time rather given to robbery; not burglary, but to the robbery of reputations; I would drop a sneer into any eulogium that was passed upon a neighbour; I would steal my neighbour's good name, and now, if anybody is robbing me somewhere, I know that oftentimes mine own heart knoweth that I myself likewise——

Is there a Spirit in the air, in the speaking heavens, that takes record and note of what we are about? I believe there is, I am sure there is. Is there a Spirit that deals out a series of equivalents —as thou, so he; as he, so thou? Yes, we are not so illtreated as we first thought; we did intend to get up a case against this man, a case of libel, and we, the plaintiff, may be the greater libellist of the two. But where would be the law? It would be a-begging. Are you guilty of drunkenness? "How can you ask such questions of a Christian congregation?" I could not if I did not address the inquiry to a Christian preacher; if I did not first thrust the sword up to the hilt in the conscience that is in the pulpit. But have I been guilty of drunkenness? Not in the barrel sense, not as distillers call drunkenness; I have never reeled; nay, I am a Temperance advocate: and yet I have been guilty of drunkenness. Men get drunk in the soul, men are drunk in the spirit, in the intention. Who, then, can stand? None. And see to it that you do not too harshly condemn those who are soberer than you are. But where would be criticism, censure? There would be none. "Judge not, that ye be not judged, for with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged." Mark that you are erecting a standard by which you shall be judged. Oh, it is terrible. Ay, so it is; but men will not face these things, and make practical matter of them; they will live in dream and vision and contemplation, and forget that they themselves may be doing what they condemn in others.

Take it in some other senses, in some very obvious and patent forms. Do you condemn jealousy in the abstract? O yes, you would condemn anything in the abstract. Are you jealous? Am I jealous? Jealousy is cruel as the grave; it eats to its own undoing, it poisons itself by what it lives on. I am not jealous of a preacher who is a hundred miles away, and you have to travel a hundred miles across country to get at him; then I say, Success to him, he is an excellent man and a very choice preacher. But the man who is next door, the man who shares the pulpit with you, your co-pastor, your assistant: are you always generous and noble to the young man? Tell me;

out with it! And if you hear, or I hear, any cruel remarks from others, may I or you not have made them about our neighbour, and may they not be coming back to us? The old proverb says that curses, like chickens, come home to roost; there are echoes that hurt us very much. Men shrink from the truth when it applies to themselves. They say, Sing a pleasant song to me, lull me, flatter me, bless me. Have you blessed others? What does that matter? It matters everything: for oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise ——. Do you, do I, tell lies by keeping up false appearances? Just to have a thousand pounds more than some other man has! If I have not the money I will look it. Is that right, is that a noble policy, is that heroic faith? Why not be simple, true, direct, just what you are, and put on nothing? Things that are put on may be put off. Let thy greatness be in thy life, in the very tissue, if I may so say, of thy soul and spirit; only appear to be what thou in reality art. If I am going about in this gold-laced coat, some rascal may tear it from my shoulders, and then I shall be worse than naked; I will not put it on, I will be myself. That is right; have a character of thine own—strong, tender, noble, always helping in its own small way to redeem and bless the world.

There is a great deal of negative ill. We do not tell lies, we act them. How awful a thing living is! Yes, it is an awful thing to live. We can hardly open our mouths without telling a lie; it is so easy to be false, it is so natural to follow our father the devil. God, help us; Christ, save us; blood of the everlasting covenant, cleanse us! Do we not make up for one thing by doing another? The little Pharisee says, "However bad I may be, I could not do that, that which he does; I could never stoop to that, bad or imperfect as I may be." Oh, thou whited wall, thou ghastliest of the sepulchres! thy Lord knoweth by the penetration of His Spirit what a whited wall thou art. Do not make remarks upon some other man, but scrutinise and sit in judgment upon thyself; be jealous about thine own integrity, and thou wilt be merciful to other men's infirmities. But where would be conversation? There would be none, until

men learned to speak about great subjects, the very speaking about them cleansing the mouth and purifying the heart, the very eloquence of the tongue being as a baptism of the heavens. Let us get into great themes, noble contemplations, then we shall be advancing towards the pure heavens, with all their untold star jewels. Hear this man; he says: "I may be heterodox about the vowels, but I occupy a very definite position about the consonants." Indeed, what a miracle is this! He may have his own heretical views about vowels, but the consonants, why, he would die for a consonant. Fool! But the other man you see, does not care much about consonants, but he is in dead earnest about the vowels! What is the teaching of Scripture? Keep the whole faith, be equally strong at every point, have no pet graces and pet virtues, but live in Christ and be a whole man, sphered out, full-orbed, a character equal to a miracle. This other man, what is he mumbling about? He says, "Well, I may be a little shaky on the aspirates, but you should see what I am in orthography." How many men talk just like that, in other words, and in other relations! They confess that on the aspirate they are a little weak-kneed, but when it comes to orthography, you may rely on them though the world forsake you. That is just how we are in religious matters; we have our pet doctrines, our favourite topics, we have our theses, that we would not part with on any account whatsoever, but another man's theses we could cast them all over the wall into the river. Oh, when shall I be a whole man, good in the vowels, and good in the consonants, good in the aspirates, and good in the spelling? Well, I cannot be all that at once. No, you cannot. But I can work towards it. Yes, take heart, do not be discouraged, begin to be from the first a new man, a whole man, a complete man. What would you think of a party who said, "I am very deaf, but I think I may be excused for my deafness because I see so well"? That would be a very curious way of compounding; we want you to hear well and to see well, and that is what Christ does with His men; He makes them equally strong in the long run at every point. Do not suppose that He makes us all equally strong the very first day

we know Him; we are poor and imperfect, we stumble and grope as they who are in the darkness, but if so be our heart is steadfast towards Christ, and our spirit is looking up towards God, then we shall little by little come into the kingdom of light, and praise God in a worthy song. O, do not let your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in the Saviour. We shall not be complete until we are in Christ. We are complete in Him. Once I was a frivolous man, some may say, but I am seeing now the gravity and seriousness of things. How pitiful God was to me in my low estate!

A minister, a long way from here, has written to me on a postcard to-day. The only good thing about the postcard is that it was signed and dated and addressed; that is right. He refers to the Holy Ghost under the initials H. G. I write back to him and say, I do not know who H. G. is when applied to the Deity. When a man can be irreverent in these things, his character is in danger of rotting altogether. Reverence I insist upon having. Unbelief may be but a momentary delusion, but irreverence is an insult to the Deity. I have every respect for a reverent mind; something can be made of it, it will come right at the last, for it means to be right from the first. Oh, how I wished, some man may say, to disregard holy things, but God opened my eyes, I saw where I got wrong, and now I return to the Shepherd and Bishop of my soul. God be thy Amen! God does not judge us alone, He judges us in Christ; He looks at what Christ is, not so much at what we are, and He sees in the Christ the humanity that is to be. Christ is the Son of Man. God does not look at all the wayward, callous, defiant sinners, and incomplete men, and erring, fallible men; but He looks at Christ as humanity, and for Christ's sake He sends the showers of His blessing upon the gaping, parched earth; in other words, upon the necessitous and expectant souls of men. Did you get that idea thoroughly into your minds, that you are not judged purely in your own case, on your own merits, and within the four corners of your individuality, but that God's judgment is wider, more gracious, and He says in His heaven, Poor struggling souls, it is hard

for thee; with the world, the flesh, and the devil continually appealing to thee, it is hard for thee; I will look at the perfect Son, at the complete Christ, I will accept them in the Beloved, and they shall grow as time and opportunity afford, and in the meantime for My Son's sake I will pour out My blessing upon thee. Do not abuse that text; let not the dog eat the children's bread; do not say, "I may do what I like; I may be an imperfect creature, but the preacher has told me this morning that I will be right at last." I told you no such thing. I said, You must strive, you must do your best, you must take the kingdom of heaven, as it were, by the violence of your very weakness, then God will answer you in the name and for the sake of His Son. Shall we then go on to sin that grace may abound? God forbid. We must deny ourselves, correct ourselves, chasten ourselves. I beat myself with naked fists, I strike myself, said the apostle, in the eyes, lest having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Brethren, you are listening to a man to-day who knows that oftentimes also in his own heart he is aware that he himself has done the very things he condemns in others. Every man sins according to his own peculiar infirmity, and every man cultivates some specific and favourite virtue. What we have to aim at is wholeness of character. Oh, how I have neglected my opportunities! What I might have been in the spiritual life to-day, if I had been an honest man and a strenuous worker! Oh, that I had hearkened unto God's law! then had my peace flowed like a river and my righteousness had been as the waves of the sea. God pity me! And He answers, I will, I will pity thee, I will pour My blessing upon thee, and upon all who are of a broken and a contrite heart, and you shall see brighter days; you have seen nothing of summer yet; under these cold grey skies I cannot show you what I mean by summer; if you, saith the Lord God Almighty, saw the summer as I mean you to see it, it would be glory, sunshine upon sunshine, a very torrent of light, and yet adapted to the weakest human vision. We start upon false figures and poor infirm similes. We have a very imperfect vocabulary; but we are

going to learn the vocabulary of God, and then we shall be able to say what our new feelings are like. I cannot see much now, but I believe it is there to be seen. That is the great faith that comforts and inspires us. What are the bells ringing for? What bells? Don't you hear them? No. I do. Shall I deny the bell-ringing because I do not hear it? This man says he hears it, his hearing is quicker, he has a finer auditory nerve, and hears it a long way off, and I with my poor hearing can hear nothing but the noises in the market-place. I bless God for the prophets and the singers and the women who have seen the Saviour, who see Him now, though I cannot see Him. My imperfection is not the standard by which to judge Him. But these poor, poor fools who think they see everything, whereas they see nothing! The dog heard the footfall. I did not; because I did not there was no footfall to hear. Poor reasoning. We shall know better some day.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the triune God, be with us till time shall be no more. Amen.

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we thank Thee that we are in Thy house, God's own tabernacle, a refuge from the storm, the shadow of a great rock. We thank Thee for any desire in our hearts to be here; this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. We find water in the fountains, we find light in the sun, we find rest in God. The Lord comfort us with His own peace, and make us strong with His own ability. Every day is a jewel, every hour an opportunity for the incoming of Thy grace. Oh that we were more alive, that we had life more abundantly, according to Christ's own purpose, that we might live in every point and every energy and every aspiration. The Lord be praised for the comforts of His Gospel, for its healing strength, for its healing sympathy, for everything in it that appeals to our best nature. We thank Thee for all Thy gifts in Christ Jesus; in the Saviour of the world all Thy gifts are summed up in one grand benediction; in Christ we have all stored riches; may Christ therefore dwell in us and be above us, and about us, and create the very atmosphere of our life; then shall we be glad in the Lord, and with a great noise we will come before His holy altar. Wilt Thou forgive our sins? It is the glory of Christ to forgive; He never withheld forgiveness. Grant us the sweetness and the fulness of Thine own pardon; then shall we rejoice and be glad as those who have got rid of a great burden. Amen.

CLXXV.

SETTING SUNS.

"*When the sun was setting.*"—LUKE iv. 40.

HEN all was over, when the day was done, when men ceased to work and fell to rest. "When the sun was setting." Are there not twelve hours in the day? I must work while it is called day, for the night cometh wherein no man can work. What happened when the sun was setting? A brighter sun was rising. Thus it always is with Christ Jesus. When the sun in the heavens sets, a light above the brightness of the sun burns in the east. Christ is never done; He only concludes to begin again. Whilst He was in the world He shed His blood for the world; the incarnation poured itself out in blood from hour to hour till all the years were done. Who knows when the Incarnation began? It did not begin in Bethlehem; that was only part of it; that was the first stage. When was man created? Not when he was shaped out of the dust; that was only the outline and framework of the man; he was a man when God breathed into him the breath of life. And Christ was the incarnate God when His hour came. "Woman, mine hour is not yet come." Your hour is always ready. Man has an appointed time of coming, and it came in great power and glory when He began to save the world. Oftentimes the sun is rising when the sun is setting. It is so in your case, and will be so if you love God and Christ and nestle in the breast of the eternal love; the sun will never set except to make way for a broader, brighter.

What happened when the sun was setting? "He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them." It was the brightest sunrise they ever saw;

they forgot that the sun was setting in the heavens, for a greater, healthier, happier Sun had risen elsewhere. It will always be so in human history. When your heart's sun is setting another sun will take its place and fill the sky with a brighter light. There is no despair in love, no sunset hour in the higher passions. God will be merciful to you, and He will comfort you at the latter end. He has great stores of grace, great stretches of ability that have not yet been touched, and He will come to you in some sunset hour, and tell you that presently the Sun will rise with healing in His wings. He touched them, He laid His hands on them,—O, blessed pressure! most comfortable burden! Lay Thine hands on me, Thou Son of God, and it shall be the healing of my wounds and the new beginning of a better life. He touched them; He did not pay some other man to touch them, as we do. Ours is a little selfish, cowardly plan! We send out men at eighty pounds a year to touch the lunatics, the invalids, and those who are carrying grievous distresses. It suits us, it suits the shopkeeper that is in us; we like to remain at home and rattle the money. Send a missionary; give him eighty pounds a year, and grumble at his work, and thus let us do the service of God. A pitiful way, a proxy way, a most hateful way, and not always a successful way!

"He laid His hands on every one of them," and the laying-on of His hands was resurrection, rehabilitation, ordination, life. O Thou living Christ, why not lay Thine hands upon us, and make men of us, and heroes, and triumphant souls? Why not? There is a great deal of masonry in contact. They say that when a certain man shakes hands with you, he can by the handshake let you know whether he belongs to the Freemasons or not. What is it? Only himself knows, and his kith and kindred in that secret; but by a grand grasp you know that you are hand-locked with a brother. Has the Christian hand lost its touch? It is a hand in form, in pressure of a certain kind, but is there that electric, magnetic touch which is the secret and the seal of a high and noble personality? "One man is as good as another." Nothing of the kind; not in the hand, not in the

foot, not in the head; the difference is all along the line, marked, glaring. Did Jesus Christ not preach to these people? No; He made them hearers; He qualified them to listen by saying nothing. He said all things by not preaching, He exhausted eloquence. The disease was bodily, and must be healed on its own lines; and there was such a variety of them—"all they that had any sick with divers diseases." He had one cure for all; we have many boxes, and there is no cure in any of them. But He touched the life, went to the fountain, made the tree good, and the fruit came out all good at the tips of the branches. That was preaching, great preaching, that was exposition of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God means healing, lifting up to a new manhood, a new force. So many people think that the kingdom of God is a set of new ideas. Oh, get rid of your ideas, denounce and repel your opinions! How can *you* form any opinions, how can *I* come to any decision about the kingdom of God? There are those who can wrap up the whole kingdom of heaven in a dogma, there are those who can exhaust the Deity in an epigram; they are hinderers, they understand not the long-drawn music that has something to say in every tone of it.

He prepared the way for preaching. He did not Himself preach on this particular occasion. There are many men who live in the pulpit simply by their faculty of healing; they are what we call pastoral preachers. The people think there can be no preacher like the man they love. Why? He is not a genius. No. He does not pile climaxes. Never. What does he do? He visits us in our houses; when the little child is ill he has a comforting way with him, and he so kneels at the cradle that we never forget it. He knows the Bible in all its adaptation. When that man gets up in the pulpit they want nothing from him but his face, his benediction of a face, his quiet, gleaming, radiant love. That is how it is that many men who are not preachers succeed in the pulpit, because they have been in the houses and among the affliction and the heart-break and the uttermost distress of their people, and therefore none can occupy their position in the affection of grateful

hearts. Thus we all can preach in some way. Some preach in eloquent words, in vivid sentences, in telling and resonant paragraphs, and climaxes; they stir the blood as with the blast of a trumpet. And others have the pastoral gift; they know how to go up the creaking stairs without making a noise, they know how to speak without creating a fluttering and hurtful excitement. They say, "Let us pray," and the very saying of it is a prayer, and an answer too. I call upon you to honour such men; they are the servants of the Lord Jesus. They know the mystery and the joy of the healing kingdom. We may want such men some day; I do myself. I never send for a very eloquent man to talk to me when my heart is breaking, but for some Methodist preacher who knows all about the ways of the kingdom, who has had a great hospital experience in the treatment of broken spirits, and he can talk me back again into the joys of resurrection and spiritual certitude.

"And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ, the Son of God"; and He said, Silence! But why silence? They told the truth. Yes, they did. Why hush them in an ignominious silence? Simply because they were bad spirits. Christ never called in the aid of any one, devil or man, that was bad. The devils also believe and tremble, their faith does not bring them to peace; they believe and are afraid; they believe, and they are burned with judgment. Christ will not have any bad man as a preacher. He does not want his eloquence; He will not allow his learning to mouth its polysyllables in His sacred pulpit; He will not have it that a man shall speak under the roof of the sanctuary, and go out and scatter his energies in the devil's service. Ah! that makes preaching hard work. A man has to preach to himself; he has to cut his own heart into little pieces before he can talk to others; he has to examine himself and know whether he is right at the root, and, blessed be God, we can be right at the root, and yet be just one great bundle of imperfections and infirmities. He does not call for men who have no infirmities and no weaknesses, but He knows the difference between a man who is infirm on purposes

and weak that he may serve an end, and the sincere man who is only a man. "The best of men are but men at the best," and Christ knows this, and therefore it hath pleased Him to call out men who are very imperfect and infirm, but sincere at heart, to tell what they know of His kingdom. Oh, the great preacher amongst us, the burning preacher, the fervid, fire-lighting preacher, was cross-examined once by the seaside. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? . . . Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" And Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" Peter said, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee"—coward, blasphemer, the worst of Thy followers, though the oldest, yet right down in my heart of hearts Thou knowest that I love Thee; I never can pray the blasphemy off my lips, there it will remain as long as I am a man, but the reddest of my blood is Thine, the best and tenderest of my love—O give me charge to feed Thy sheep and Thy lambs! Love is ordination. And Jesus thus by the seaside recovered the wanderer, and forgave the traitor; He knew what a man he was when He got at the core of his heart.

"He suffered the devils not to speak." But they told the truth. Quite so, but they must not tell what they knew because they did not know it in their inner spirit and according to its sincere and inspiring meaning. But they may have been very eloquent. Tongues are nothing, eloquence can tell lies as well as tell the truth. Eloquence can be sold, eloquence, mere verbal eloquence, is taught in books you can buy for pence. Away with this sour wine, this guilty love, this mimicking of the voice of heaven. What wonder if He was not popular on the earth? what wonder if He was not followed by great self-sacrificing multitudes, only by crowds of admirers, and people who only admired, instead of adoring? And what is true of devils is true of all false institutions. He will not have them. We have built this house, and we have painted it and bedizened it with manifold colour. Take it away! I will not have such offerings on My altar. You may bring them, but there shall no fire descend from heaven to accept them. Well, but

they may be great givers. Take it away! I would be poor with such gold; I have not where to lay Mine head on earth; I am prepared to go through the same experience again: take back the blood-money, and spend it in hell. Oh, Lord Jesus, Thou art an austere man. No, He is not, but He is sincere, and spiritual, and He will only have that which is true and simple and good. But I have here some flowers that are very precious. No, says Christ, they are not; I see the blood oozing out of them, the blood of wrong-doing, of iniquity, of falsely gotten money; I see the blood trickling down the stem; stand back, do not come here! This little girl comes with her handful of hedge-grown daisies; ay, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me," they bring what is of the nature of Mine own kingdom, and in this poor coloured grass I shall see the blood of Mine own heart. So shall it ever be; all false institutions, all corrupt patronage, shall be repelled, whilst the publicans and harlots and so-called wicked ones will come in and be welcomed under the sign of the Cross. Do not misunderstand this: all gold is not blood-bought or blood-wrenched. There is an honest gold, there are millionaires who are humble. God send them ten times the money they have; the more they have the more we shall all have. They are radiant and stalwart sons of God.

"And when it was day, He departed and went into a desert place: and the people sought Him, and came unto Him, and stayed Him, that He should not depart from them." They said, No, abide with us always, we are happy and healthy whilst Thou art here. Christ said, No, "I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also." What is the lesson? Christ must not be localised. If we want to localise Him, we are selfish; we must send the royalest love and gift to other cities also, saying, Let them hear by all means. Oh that all the cities of the world could hear this music! That is the true secret of missions. If we cannot send the living Christ Himself, we must send the living Christ in the living missionary to preach good tidings of great joy. But we do not care for missionaries. Now be faithful with your own souls. When you know that a mis-

sionary is going to preach in your church you stay away. If there is any sin against the Spirit of God, against the genius of love, it is when men stay away and will not listen to men who have hazarded their lives for the Lord Jesus. The time will come when you missionaries will be heard and the eloquent orator will be left to speak to empty pews. Keep your hearts up; you are servants of Christ; you have given much to the Christian cause, and some day the churches will be glad to receive you, and give you floral and musical welcome: wait! The prophet will be sent for. We must not localise the Christ, Localise the sunshine; go out and say to the sun before he has well risen, "Shine on my garden, shine on my fields, do not shine on anybody else's garden; I love the sunlight so much I could take it all." Localise the wind, that breeze of health, that everywhere-travelling missionary of good digestion—fine health, red blood. Localise the wind. Oh, get it into some little house of yours and say, "Now, not wishing to disturb or disappoint anybody else, I shall be very glad if you will sign a contract to the effect that you will blow through my house, my garden, and breathe wholly and absolutely upon my possessions." The wind would hiss if it could; sometimes it sounds like a hiss, and who knows but it is scorning some felon who wishes to entrap him into a false covenant. Localise the fragrance. Many men try to do that; they build great walls, and they say to one another, "You are nice and sheltered here." "Yes, we built these walls in the hope of securing some degree of privacy and solitude." They congratulate one another on building other people out. The wall never built anybody in, except the few who paid for its erection; the wall is not inclusive, and if they could keep all the fragrance inside—so it would seem in some cases; thank God, not in all, not by any means in all—they would be glad, but the fragrance, like the Gospel, rises and falls down on the outside of the wall, until the boys who are playing at marbles and the girls who are playing at skipping-rope say, "Ah, there is a garden near here!" Poor little lost creatures, you never saw a garden, but you caught the fragrance. Do you know where that fragrance came from? No.

Well, if you are in a certain neighbourhood, it came from one of the meanest, stingiest, most weazened-looking creature you ever saw in your life; he did not want to lose any of it, but he had to lose it all; and if you are in another neighbourhood, that fragrance came from the garden of a man who would be glad to take you all in to the extent of his ability, who would be glad to give you all home and rest and comfort. So you must not condemn all alike. Condemn where condemnation is just; do not condemn where condemnation may be unjust; *judex damnatur cum nocens absolvitur;* be just and fear not.

"And He said unto them, I must preach." If He preached, shall we be ashamed of the lofty vocation? There are men who sneer at preaching because they neither preach themselves nor do they understand what the preacher means. Why, there are some men who sneer at a piano. Do you believe it? It is a fact. There are some men who sneer at music because they do not understand it. But those who understand what preaching is love it. There is nothing on earth to be compared, in their esteem, to a grand, sympathetic, ennobling religious service. There are many persons who are the set and deadly enemies of rhetoric, and their consistency is absolute, for they neither believe it nor practise it; they are utterly guiltless of all rhetoric, but they say, "This is a rhetorical exaggeration, this is a rhetorical ecstasy." Yes, and what do you do, what do you give? Is that what you have to say? Yes. This is sawdust, this is nonsense, this is the veriest platitude. You see, you can be criticised as well as other people. We must preach Christ's Gospel, we have to deliver Christ's message, and deliver it as we may, in various tone and mood, never can we get beyond the Cross of Calvary. You preach that Cross, and you will find that it grows leaves and fruit whilst you tarry, and the leaves are for the healing of the nations.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the triune God, rest upon us for our soul's daily healing. Amen.

HE preaches Christ who denounces hypocrisy. The hypocrite will be the first to regard such preaching as wanting in evangelical sentiment. The hypocrite is very fond of a really juicy, savoury doctrine. It does him no harm; he can sleep through the most of the exposition; there will be no shot-mark upon his mask. Let a preacher arise amongst us who has the gift of denunciation, the genius of objurgatory speech, a man entrusted with thunderbolts and flashes of lightning, and the hypocrite will publish his name as one who is wanting in evangelical unction. The man must bear the penalty; it is his prize, it is his commendation.

He preaches Christ who protects women and children. The cruel man will object to such preaching on the ground that it is a great departure from the lines that were taken by the unread Puritan divines. Abuse some other sin, and he will applaud you; lay your hand upon his cruelty, and he will be impracticable in his anger and madness. A man who shall stand up in the Christian pulpit and plead for women and children who are helpless, friendless, or cruelly used, is preaching the gospel, is uplifting the Cross of Christ.

He, too, preaches the gospel who tells the worst that he may come back again. It would be unworthy preaching that omitted to take notice of those who have wandered far from light and truth and beauty, virtue, honour, and nobleness. We do not want stay-at-home shepherds who, being sure of the ninety-and-nine, care nothing for the one that is lost. They are not shepherds, they are hirelings; the true shepherd cannot sleep because one of the flock is missing; when he appears to lie down his mind is full of solicitude about the absent; what if he but watch for the first hint of dawn, that he may be away to seek that which is lost, only to return when he has found it.

Blessed be that teacher, in church, in school, at home, who cannot be happy so long as there is one unhappy person over whom he can exercise some gracious influence. He preaches Christ who denounces censoriousness; he preaches the Sermon on the Mount over again. This is sadly wanting in evangelical sentiment; it will disappoint the man who lives either in cant or in sentiment.

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, we humbly pray Thee. We used to know what reviving meant, we needed not that any man should explain the word to us, we hailed it as our mother tongue; it is the Divine music, a holy word of vitality and enthusiasm and triumph. Oh that the old days would come again, the rare old triumphant days, martyr days, days when men were not afraid or ashamed to publish the Gospel of Christ. The Lord help us to have more experience of that Gospel, that we may preach it with fuller volume and more definite tone and to more fruitful purpose. We long to see the trees laden with fruit wherewith our Father may be glorified and Christ may see of the desire of His soul. We want the old people converted, and the young people to have a definite Christ-purpose in their hearts. Is He clean gone for ever? has He been cast out of the throne of our love? Do we speak of other subjects? do we ignore the Saviour? do we put Him into our conversation as a mere item? or does He rule our thought and sway our life and give unto us the abundant consolations of His Gospel? We touch His hands and His feet, we thrust our hands into His side, that this prayer may have a gracious answer. Amen.

CLXXVI.

A BIBLE READING.

"*I would not have you ignorant, brethren.*"—ROM. i. 13.

"I WOULD not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you." What have we to do with the apostle's purposes? They were the events of the day, they were of no importance, they were lost in the political ambitions and strifes of the hour. No, they were not; we have a great deal to do with the apostle's purposes. Here he is on common ground with our-

selves—a neighbour, a brother, a friend. He introduces us into the secrets of his love and his desire and his holy ambition. He talks small things to us; he enters into personal plans; he shows us his kind thoughts to the Roman Christians and other Gentiles. It is well that such passages should be in an inspired volume; they make the inspiration more homely and credible and tender. We shall get through this man and his uncommon frankness all that he knows, all that he is sure of. "Bring the cloke that I left, and especially the parchments. Salute"—then comes a long list of names, every one of which he kisses with his mouth. This is not a man with singing robes on in the usual sense of that term; he is not away in the clouds tabernacling among the stars, aspiring to the society of angels. He is a common man; he is a man amongst men; he begins and ends his grandest epistle with some little kindly salutations and remembrances. He is a natural man; he will talk to us great mysteries, but with a motherly accent.

"I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes"—sometimes as many as five times in a week and more than that, thrice a day—I have thought about you, longed for you, wanted to be with you; now, if I could have flown on wings, you would have seen me many a time. Is this in the Bible? Yes. And is a book containing such things inspired? All the more for that. "But was let hitherto—I was hindered, one thing came in upon me after another, so that my purposes and my programmes had to be broken up and reconstructed. Besides suffering a great deal, of which I shall tell you more by-and-by, there came upon me the care of all the churches; they were never quite right, they always wanted some counsel, guidance, some helpful word, some sympathetic assurance: pity me; I would have been in Rome six months ago, twelve months since; I want to be in Rome, I want to preach the Gospel in Rome, the capital; I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." Thanks! it is good reading, solid, human, neighbourly reading.

It occurs a second time in Romans xi. 25. What does he say there? He says, "I would not, brethren,

that ye should be ignorant of this mystery." What a different tone! The one neighbourly, the other profound, mysterious, muffled music. "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until—" What a mixture of words! they said he was a rough unkempt speaker, and had sometimes a boisterous and even an incoherent style; this looks like it. "Lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until—" Not a total and fatal blindness, but an "until" blindness; they shall see the morning yet, and all Israel shall be saved. Is he speaking now out of his own imagination? He never did that. "As it is written." Where? In the Old Testament. But that is obsolete! Not to me. "There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery"—get into the deeper things; get away from the surface and the frivolity of your piety, and sink deep and live among the rock-truths of God. Then he has a beautiful little parable about branches grafted in, and when we said to him, "How can branches be grafted in?" he said, "God is able"—always his answer—"God is able." Once he burst into a great torrent of eloquence, and said, "For He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

That was the God in whom Paul trusted. He trusted Him to the uttermost; he fell upon His loving breast one dark night on the sea, and the next morning he said, "I believe God." Have we any God? On paper. Have we any God? Some kind of stern iron creed. "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery"; do not imagine that I am a priest who keeps the mysteries in his own breast; I want you to share the mysteries. Oh, that is a great man, that is a healthy soul. Yes, he says, I want you to know all that I know. This man will do us good. He says, "God is able to graft them in again." Where does God's mercy end? Nowhere. All the historic houses of olden time said with one accord, with one volumi-

nous music, "His mercy endureth for ever." "Then there is hope for me?" Certainly, oh certainly. "But I have not been in church on a Sunday for a long time." That is no matter; you are here to-day; make the most of your opportunity; you have heard of God's mercy, believe it; you have heard that He is able to graft them in again, come in for a second trial. "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery"; I would have you believe in adoption. I would have you take no false view of sovereignty, election, and the like, and so become wise in your own conceits; I would have you take the whole view. Whole views correct partial views. Yes, a man may be right in the local and wrong in the universal; that is what Paul said, and I believe him with my whole heart. Look, for example, at this case. Here is a world which is supposed to be round; well, there is not a clodhopper amongst us that would not laugh at that idea. He says, "Look at this hill, it would take you the whole day to get up there, and more, you will have to sleep at the middle of the hill and begin again next day; how can the world be round? Why, it is absurd, it stands to reason; we are witnesses, we are the witnesses that have seen and not heard only." And that is quite right, my little clodhopper, very right; but I will speak to another man, and he will tell me that there is not only an agriculture and a geography and a geology—the infants of the family, the little cripples of the household—but there is an astronomy, which catches up all these inequalities and nodosities and whirls them into a globe smooth as glass. Who am I to believe? Both of them; they are both right; but never rest in a partial view, take in the whole purview, and let the whole regulate the part.

The next time it occurs is in 1 Corinthians x. 1—"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant." The same formula, it must mean something. I would not that ye should be ignorant of history, especially, "how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea . . . and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that

spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." What an interpreter, what a seer, what a man for piercing the thick covering of things and getting at the centre and the real and final meanings of the most obscure prophecies. "I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers "—then we have fathers, have we? Yes, fathers, and they all did something that we have to do. Oh, I see, then there is an essential as well as an accidental unity in the development of the human race? Precisely. But how does it come, that we have lived so long and have not known about it until now? That is the mystery and the beauty, the music and the eloquence of the Bible. Paul rises to interpret what was done in the wilderness and the sea. We do not know what is happening around us. They say—it may be true—that the next generation will interpret some men, but some men have to die and be buried and rest in the ground for two hundred years, and then some Froude, or Freeman, or Green will come up and tell us all about them. Well, we say, if we who are their contemporaries do not know them, who can know them? Let us rebuke that fallacy and get rid of it. We do not know the full meaning of things until the day arise and the day-star beam in its explanatory luminance. How strange it is! If I do not understand the Prime Minister to-day, whoever he may be, how can a man who is not born understand him? how can a man who comes into English history two centuries ahead interpret to me the man I lived with and saw sometimes in public? That is a fact, that history interprets some men. And so there are passages in the Bible that did not know what they meant at the time they were written; prophets wrote and wrote and wondered and went back again upon the wondrous dream, not knowing, wondering what the Spirit within them did signify when it testified beforehand—that is the time to testify—the sufferings of Christ, the blood-marks, the five wounds, and the glory that should follow. They saw the morning in the night, they saw the night in the gloomy darkness. For example, as I said the other day, men want now to take from us the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, because it belonged to somebody else intermediately. If it did, it was only intermediately; these words had to live on,

preach on, until Bethlehem and Calvary and Olivet, and there they received their culminating and final interpretation. Oh, our fathers, poor ignorant souls, they were wise enough at the time, but we know better than they did, and we call the fathers obsolete. But Paul would have us keep a gallery of historic examples. He would have us keep up point by point the organic nerve of history, the continuity of experience and the unity of testimony, till we all come—blessed be God, the human family will not be complete until we arrive. Heaven will have vacant places until we come, and all the history of the world will receive explanation and illumination through our poor vanishing individuality.

Where does it occur again? Some men never knew it occurred so often; they will then be surprised when I tell them that it occurs for the fourth time in 1 Cor. xii. 1—"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant." I like to hear about these spiritual gifts, the gift of gifts. Can I have those spiritual gifts? Yes, and all the Church can have them. God has the remainder of the Spirit, the residue is His, and He will pour it forth as He sheds the rain. Well, I would not have you ignorant about spiritual gifts: there is a spiritual world, a world of the white ones, children of the dream, presences that flash upon us in visions, and we knew it not until we heard the beating of departing wings. I want to tell you about these, said Paul; there is great diversity of gifts, and some men can read the spiritual world more clearly than others can; let that be understood; there are differences, yet there is a common unity. Ah, what is that unity in? Not in any other gift, but the Spirit: there are diversities of administration, but the same Spirit, What do you mean by "diversities of administration"? Well, I mean that one man has to do one thing, and another man another, and a third man something totally different, and a fourth man is to act as if the others had not acted at all. And yet somehow there will come a time when these men will meet one another and say, "Why, we have been serving the same Lord!" Yes, we have been governed and guided

and sanctified by the same Spirit. Precisely, and why did we not know it better? It was God's sovereign doing; He does not always show all His servants at the same time to one another, but we ought to live in the spirit of expectation, that some day we will understand the other man. Ah, yes, he is easy to misunderstand, I know that, but you must live in the expectant hope that one day he will be as an open book that you can read without hesitation and stumbling. But some would not like to understand the other man. I know that; they like to keep him as a puzzle. He is not to be understood externally, or verbally, but he is to be understood in his soul. Some men are orthodox and do not know it. Some men do not know how near the kingdom of heaven they are. They have been taught an ecclesiastical Christianity—that most detestable of all compounds. They have not been taught that except a man have the Spirit of Christ he is none of His. There are many men—Christ-worshippers and Christ-lovers—who do not go to Church at all; that is because they do not understand the Church, or it is because the Church has taken no pains to explain to these men that they are not the sole temple of the Lord and there is none other. The Church should be more explanatory, the Church should invite the confidence of men. Do not let us believe, brethren, that Christianity is a branch of freemasonry, wherein you must be initiated and introduced and supported by those who were freemasons before you, and that you must receive a hand-sign and a password. Christianity is not a secret society, it is as open as the day. Once they wanted to keep the little children away from it; these little freemasons came toddling up, and they looked dreams and wonders at this white-souled Son of Man, and He said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me." The little children?—"Yes, the very least child that can speak to Me, let him come, and I will make room for him; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." What a revelation, what an encouragement!

"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant." But these spiritual gifts afford a wonderfully fertile seed-ground for the growth

of superstition and general nonsense. We must have mental balance, intellectual discrimination, and that uprising and struggle of the soul that wants to be at the truth, whatever it may be, terrible, or gentle as the sun of the morning. That is the right spirit. Many people think they have spiritual gifts when they have none. But all this wondering and struggling after the spiritual has a meaning. Do not misunderstand the case. These poor souls that are knocking are in reality, though they know it not, praying; that is their way of praying; do not despise it, grow away from it; do not break their idol until they are fit to receive the living God. When men call up witches of Endor and go into fortune-telling, and into all the mysteries, Eleusinian and others, and even into the black arts, their meaning may be very good, they may not know what their meaning is; have patience with them, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God. The apostles will give you the test. Any spirituality that means in its development self-sacrifice, self-renunciation, noble effort on the part of others, is not a bad art, whatever it may be; but strive after the spiritual gifts as they are indicated in the New Testament, and when you have got them all, if that be possible, behold, I show you a more excellent way—Charity is the greatest of all spiritual gifts.

Where does it occur again? It occurs again in 2 Cor. i. 8: "We would not, brethren, have you ignorant." How the formula recurs! What of? "We would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble." We should like to hear about your trouble, and if we can assuage it we will. There are tears we cannot touch, but if we can touch yours there shall not be a tear in your eyes. "Our trouble which came to us in Asia" and everywhere, "that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life." Then why did not you give it up? that is what we should have done; when we do not like a thing we renounce it, and if the minister says anything in the pulpit we do not like we take our hassocks away. Why did not you do so in Asia, or why did not you show a spirit that would have surprised people? Well, we

want you in Corinth to know about this trouble in Asia, great trouble; even the most hopeful of us gave way. One night I was nearly giving way myself, but the Lord stood by me; I felt as if I could not bear it. Oh, what heroic days! I felt as if my very strength was weakness, and I cried unto God to help me, and He did. You know what Bishop Bonner said to William Hunter; have you heard that? "No, I only read the daily papers." Oh, indeed! but this is not in the daily papers. The Bishop said, in effect: "Well, now, you know you are only a boy, you are sixteen years of age, no more; is it not a pity for you to persist in what we regard as heresy? you cannot stand the fire, you are only a little boy," and Hunter bared his arm and held it above the candle-flame in the house, and looked steadily at the Bishop whilst the flame got hold of him. Brethren, these were the men who made England, and who made it possible for us to meet under this roof to-day. I would that some of our young friends had more backbone, more genuine conviction, more self-forgetting enthusiasm.

Now the feeling that I have after reading all these passages is that Paul was not the man to keep anything from us that he could give to the Church. "Brethren, I would not have you ignorant—I would not have you ignorant—I would not have you ignorant. I am here in all my frankness to tell you about Christ and His Cross and the way heavenly." Well, he came very near to that in his epistle to the Corinthians when he used a formula not quite identical, but with an identical meaning. He said, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Oh, what good news! The earth will soon be all dead. We have dug in it tens of thousands of graves, it will soon be all bones, all the bones of good men, a very valley of vision. Say something to us, thou great Paul! He said, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible." Oh, how grander than Plato!

Then he supports his peroration by showing us that the whole work has been the work of sin, and that Christ came to take away the sin of the world, and that He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. He will look the fatal look, and death shall flee away.

In the providence of God we have come to the last Thursday morning service in 1901. How the years fly! What noise is made we make, not they. The year goes on, night and day; while we are sleeping we are dying. Let us buy up the opportunity, let us redeem the time. What is next year to be? This is a time for making new vows, deep and holy resolutions. What kind of sheet have we to hand back to the Master? Blurred and blotted, and interlined and expunged; some of the writing fair, and other foul. He gives us a clean sheet, and we give it back almost spoiled, and but for His grace it would be spoiled altogether. I have been with you now thirty-two and a half years; they have been wonderful years for the display and the proof, manifold in its confirmations, that God has been with us, that His mercy has been our stay and our continual hope. Where were some of you thirty-two and a half years ago?

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the triune blessing of the triune God, abide with us in the summer and in the winter, and to the end, until on tired eyes there softly lies the stillest of all slumbers. Amen.

[*Sunday Morning, 29th December*, 1901.]

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we would speak unto Thee as a man speaketh to his friend, we would tell Thee everything, we would omit nothing of the sin and the shame, the feebleness and the misdoing. But Thou knowest us altogether; Thou searchest our hearts as with a light. Thou dost hold a candle above the secrets of Jerusalem, Thou seest us and knowest us altogether; behind the fair face Thou dost see the foul design; behind the friendly smile Thou dost see the gleaming dagger. We come before Thee as those who have no right to come: we have done the things we ought not to have done, we have forfeited our standing in the sanctuary, and as for the altar, we have defiled it and are prostrated in shame. There is none righteous, no, not one; the whitest is blackest; to our seeming, things are not what they ought to be. God be merciful unto us sinners! Give us a deep and thrilling sense of Thy mercy; may we know that we live in forbearance, that if it were a question of righteousness we have no standing-ground, for all our righteousness is as a thing not to be named without the blushes of shame. Behold us in our lowest state and trample us not under Thy feet. God be merciful unto us sinners. Thou hast brought us to the end of another year; we have spoiled the time, we have blurred the fair page Thou didst give us to write: God be merciful unto us sinners! We come to confess our sin; for, if we confess our sin, Thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sin. Teach us what a miracle this is of forgiveness; may we not take the word as one of our words, a term we invented, a phrase of the tongue; may we think a moment, may we remember that forgiveness is of God, and how God forgives we cannot tell. But we have heard the word, we can never forget the word pardon; it is none of ours, it fell from eternity. It comes upon us as a Gospel: we thank Thee for pardon. Our pardon comes through Jesus Christ Thy Son, who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. Help us to realise this and to show our gratitude for it. Thou knowest what we have done and what we have left undone. Thou knowest what contradictions we are, and how we pray and forget. Look upon us as a nation, and pity us, and save us in our sore distress. We have gone after vanity and laughter, and we have sought the daughters of pleasure and have prostrated ourselves before their feet. We send missionaries

to the heathen, and we slay our enemies. Thou knowest this curious parable of life, this most horrible and shameful tragedy, and Thou art using us as instruments for working out some sovereign purpose of Thy providence. God pity us in our littleness; the Lord Himself be the King of the land, and pour forth the spirit of counsel and the spirit of righteousness upon all the people. God save our King, and all his royal house, and all his counsellors and advisers, and those who take responsibility in the leadership of the nation; may they be grave and sober-minded men, not laughing over their wine and forgetting the people. The Lord bless all the families of the land—beautiful thought! the families of the land—the dew of the country, the childhood of the whole nation. The Lord look upon all manhood and womanhood, and give us the spirit of daring and the spirit of nobleness We have read the history of our fathers until we are crimsoned shame; we did not know we had such fathers; we have not only forgotten, we have betrayed them. God be merciful to us sinners! And as for the coming year, where Thou hast drawn a veil we will not attempt to pierce it. We will bow down at the year, and thank God for His mercies, and put our confidence in Him who pities those that fear Him as a father pitieth his children. Now let us thank Thee for all heroic men, terrible men, fierce, luxury-despising men, who pillowed their heads on the rocks, and were folded in the sleep of a good conscience. May we not continue to be little men, but awake unto righteousness, and serve the Christ of God. Amen.

CLXXVII.

CONFLICTING FORCES.

"*When Ahab saw Elijah.*"—1 KINGS xviii. 17.

HERE are no Elijahs now. We are obliged to read about them when we wish to refresh the heroic sentiment. Think what a moment that was "when Ahab saw Elijah"! The two great forces of the world met, the kingly and the prophetic. We should think of these sensitive moments in history; they would quicken us into better endeavour, and

increase the force which belongs to the sons of God. It was a terrible and most memorable meeting. We never thought to have seen that moment—quivering, passionate moment. The two men met—how did they meet? "It came to pass after many days that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and"—I will give thee a proof that thou hast come from heaven—"I will send rain upon the earth." What did Elijah do? He "went"—the thing we will not do; we grumble, we hesitate, we suggest excuses, we ask if to-morrow will not do as well as to-day. But "Elijah went" straight as a thunderbolt. "Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And there was a sore famine in Samaria. And Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his house"—a most pious and religious man, who did not steal from the privy purse, who kept his fingers honest, clean: that was a miracle, not a miracle to satisfy the gaping crowd, but a clean, wholesome miracle. Obadiah had a history, he had a good record; he "took an hundred prophets," and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water. "And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts. And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, Art thou that my lord Elijah?" —the greatest creature in the land. "And he answered him, I am; go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hands of Ahab, to slay me? As the Lord thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth." Observe the predicament I am in; mine is a very sensitive condition. "Was it not told

my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord, how I hid an hundred men of the Lord's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?" and that is a point against me, that is in my record; and the moment I fall into this pit they will call up that record and say, This is the man that deceived us once, and now he has deceived us a second time. "And Elijah said"—he was a quiet man when he wished to be quiet—"As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to day." The thing was told Ahab. "And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah"—he had never seen him before, he had never seen a man before, he had never seen a prophet before, he had never seen that wonderful face in whose folds the lightning hid, and in whose voice the thunder slept — Ahab was frightened that day. There are men who are ghosts, and dozens of them; Elijah was a multitudinous ghost, and Ahab said, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim." There they were, it might have been on the roadside in some hearing field, behind some listening hedge; and Ahab knew the challenge and evaded it. "Now," said Elijah, "therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him. . . . The God that answereth by fire, let Him be God"—in all centuries, for ever and ever.

Thus when Ahab saw Elijah the two great forces of the world met, the forces that have always been in conflict, the kingly and the prophetic, the secular and the spiritual, this world and the next. God never made any king; when He gave the people a king in answer to their clamour, it was to punish them, and punished they were. The Lord is King, and he who would dispute His throne brings wrath

on the land. "When Ahab saw Elijah" the physically mighty and the morally strong were face to face. Ahab had great resources; Ahab was very careful about the horses and the mules, and anxious to keep them alive in the time of the water famine. That is right.

What other instance is there in which the two kingdoms met? The most notable case was when Judas and Jesus stood face to face, and Judas "went backward and fell to the ground." That is so; the nation that fears God will ultimately win. Judas knew the place, Judas took the ruffian band to that holy ground; and in the nighttime they said, "Where is He?" and Jesus said, "Whom seek ye?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth," and the answer was "I am He"; then as soon as He said, "I am He," they went back and fell on the ground. That is national history in a parable, that is the history of the kingdom in one sentence; the whole thing is there, deny it, pervert it, mistake it, as we may.

Ahab had great resources, I say, but the resources of a king are mere nothings when God arises to judge the earth. There are times when we are ashamed of our greatness, and when our glory is proved to be but a veering wind of vanity. It is well to have such moments in history; they ventilate history, they disinfect history, they bring in a new birthday of historic relations. Who are these men? The one, the pampered king; the other, the raven-fed prophet; and the raven-fed prophet was the stronger of the two. God will command the ravens. They eat weakness who eat luxuries. Take what God gives, the little simple meal, and you may be the strongest man in the world. Daniel told us that wonderful secret. He said, "Now do give us an opportunity of showing what simple things are worth; we beg and entreat thee to give us an opportunity of showing what can be done by pulse and water, by porridge, by oatmeal, without wine." They had ten days of it, and in the end Daniel said, "Prove us now. Look upon us, see the results," and the luxury-fed men did not come up to the mark; they saw that they were beaten. The

oatmeal men beat the creatures who fatten upon champagne. It is curious, but right; search history for the proof.

It is well that secular kings should look upon anointed prophets. How do these men live? They live in the wilderness, and are strong; they never sat at a king's table, and yet there is pith in their muscle and there is meaning in their voice. Oh, to read the history of the strong! But our young people will not do it; they want to read the book of the day, the novel of the time, they want to eat the sunshine of the unholy hour. But Knox and Peden and Cargill and Renwick and Ridley and Latimer will have their day; they come up now and then, and every time they come up they come up higher, kinglier, diviner. "Oh!" said the queen, "do not let me hear that man Knox; he frightens me, that eagle face horrifies me; can't you get rid of him?" Knox lives to-day here and there very strongly. He never feared the face of clay. He told the truth and took the consequence. Knox was poor at compromises; never in all his rough life did he enter into a compromise. That would have to be explained to him; it would be a dictionary word, and he would listen and forget while he listened, for some words do not stick in the memory of some men, they are as water poured forth. Perhaps some of you have heard of Peden, and the most of you probably never heard of Peden. He could not live in these days, he would tear us all to pieces; we would call him mad, we would say he had a kind of rough gift, but he was a man to be avoided. He is in the little tavern there resting awhile in the course of his journey, and some swearing, blatant-tongued beast of a persecutor is outside; he is denouncing Peden, and hurling epithets upon his name, little knowing or recking that Peden was there. Peden came out and said, "God will smite thee in the mouth this day, and before the sun be set thou shalt die of an agonising disease." That night, the same night, the man's mouth was opened in hideousness, and he could speak no more; and that night he was killed, and the devils drew him away into their place in the deep darkness, that there they might gnaw him at their pleasure. There

are no such men now. Ahab is here, but Elijah is away. Such is history in its transient phases; but there has gone forth a word of testimony and a word of judgment which shall one day be redeemed and realised, and the Lord shall yet get His own. Oh, these putty-mouthed people that are living now! it is for some wise purpose; we do not know what that purpose is; it will be revealed by-and-by.

The rebuke was turned upon the king. "Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house." He had a bad record. Men's record comes up against them again and again. The old writing is looked for, searched for, brought up, forced upon the white-faced Ahabs of the world. "Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: fear him who hath power to cast both soul and body into hell fire." "When Ahab saw Elijah" he saw a man who was the king's superior, and the king knew it, owned it. Superiority has not to be proved by testimonials; superiority has to be tested by personality. When you come near the king you will know it. I mean the moral king, the spiritual king, the intellectual king, in any department of life whatever. You know the leader, you give place to him.

"When Ahab saw Elijah" he saw judgment. There was judgment in those gnarled, knitted eyebrows, and Ahab felt the scorching of the hidden lightning. "When Ahab saw Elijah" he saw for the first time unconsciously an honest man—a terrible sight to the wicked. There is no more terrible judgment upon an ungodly man than the presence of a man who is godly. He says nothing, he makes no charges, no accusations, but the wretch knows it, and feels as if fire were crumbling him up, and he hates the honest men. Well, it comes to this, in one living summary, that when society sees the Christian Church, society will be convicted, may own to the conviction, may respond to the challenge, and may be made holy unto the Lord. It has always been so. Why do we make a wonder of this? Why go so far for Elijah? why not tarry at the point called Christ? for

He terrified everyone who did not approach Him sympathetically and penitentially. They were not easy when He was in the house; they let Him have the table, He had a right to the host's seat; He never went into any house to dine, without making the house all His own, without claiming it; for everybody felt that here is a Personality which answers the riddle of human nature, and confers a glory upon the human estate. Everybody who was wrong-hearted, who had anything to hide, and who criminally sought to hide it, was afraid of Jesus; but anybody who wanted really to show Him their heart could approach Him without fear, tremor, apprehension; He waited to save, He waited to heal. He is waiting to-day for these two very purposes—to heal and to save.

What do you want us to do? Well, I want the young men to be in their degree like Elijah, or like Obadiah, or like some other simple-minded but God-fearing man. You are coddled and pampered, your slippers are warmed for you. I want you as a Church to have a testimony, a witness, a great and solemn declaration. Keep the bad men out of the house. "But they laugh well." Yes, they laugh well, for the moment, but what do you want with laughter? It is a felon that will trick you and cheat you to your face. We want men of backbone, sturdy, stalwart, living, godly, fearless men. We do not want too many cautious men—cautious to criminality. We are now endeavouring to checkmate the devil by very harmless and subtle processes. There is one great process that is coming into play in two or three days' time; I think we ought to hold a festival over it, a great rejoicing meeting; and that is that children under a certain age are no longer to be permitted to go into a public-house for drink for the family; I am glad of that. I could only wish that the Act of Parliament included adults as well as children. We are on the road—who knows but that one day England may be sober? It will be the day of England's salvation.

I suppose it was the closing year that made your singing so dull and poor this morning. You were oppressed by the shadows of declining time. I am not. Declining time is opening eternity.

Take that view of it, and shout with the voice of trumpets and the storm of voices that the Lord is King, and we will praise Him.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the whole blessing of the Godhead, abide with us in coming years, as in the years that are gone. Amen.

ORDER OF SERVICE.

SUNDAY MORNING, 29TH DECEMBER, 1901.

Voluntary ... ... "Andante" ... ... *Barnett*

Introit 69 ... "Lord, for Thy tender mercies' sake" ... *Farrant*

The Lord's Prayer.—*Field.*

Hymn 5 ... "Lord of all being, throned afar."

1st Lesson. Psalm ciii. 13-18.

Chant 144 ... ... Rev. xv. 3, 4; 11-15 ... ... *J. E. West*

2nd Lesson. Matt. vi. 27-34.

Anthem 53 ... ... "Let us now go" ... ... *Hopkins*

Prayer.

Hymn 714 ... "Winter reigneth o'er the land"

Sermon.

Offertory and Quartette:

"Cast thy burden" ... ... (*Elijah*) *Mendelssohn*

Hymn 717 ... ... "O God, the Rock of Ages."

Benediction and Threefold Amen.—*Gounod.*

Voluntary ... ... "Postlude" ... ... *Batiste*

PASTORAL WORDS.

THERE is not a man who has not in his heart, or who has not had in his heart, or who will not have in his heart, some shadow, pain, trouble. It is the common lot, and it has meaning in it. One day we may be able to piece all these things together and see them shaping themselves into a merciful purpose.

Let me speak one gentle word. Take out your memorandum books, and let me make an engagement for you. But you need not take out your diary, because I know that you have no engagement for the day which I am going to mention. How do I know that there is a vacancy in your diary? Because all history tells me that it is so. It is impossible to be mistaken in this matter. So you need not look into your memorandum book, because there is a vacant place there which I now want to fill up. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee." Now you have no engagement for the day of trouble! You have not.

Your friends do not want to see you in the day of trouble. They do not want to open the door to a man who has a burden upon his back. They say, "Call upon us in the summer time, call upon us when thou art garlanded with blossoms; call upon us when thy hands are laden with fruit; come when fortune is propitious, when the winds are southerly, when there is blue sky overhead." But you have no engagement for the day of trouble. God therefore comes and asks that that day may be His. That very conception ought to convert men instantly.

We claim it to be a divine revelation, a fatherly truth, a message out of God's great heart. "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." Observe the reasoning. He does not say, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He is powerful; or for He is wise; or for He is infinite." These things never would have touched us; we could have escaped all that kind of reasoning. But casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you!

Sympathy is His challenge. He careth for you! That is the ground of meeting. Sympathy is power; sympathy is omnipotence; sympathy is omniscience; sympathy is infinitude of mercy and blessing and sufficiency, when found in God. This is His gentle word: "Cast all your care upon Me, for I care for you."

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, this is our first service in the New Year. Shall we finish the year which we have begun? Shall our sun set at mid-day? Shall we wait until the gathering of the clouds? We cannot tell, we would not know; it is best that all our time is in God's own hands. Come when Thou wilt, as Thou wilt, only find us ready at Thy coming, Thou glorious Son of Man. May we not be too late for Thy supper, may we not have it answered to us that we have knocked at the door too late. Behold, Thou dost stand at the door and knock; if any man open the door Thou wilt come in unto him and make him glad with a great joy. May all our hearts be opened to receive the Lord, may we even drink together in holy fellowship. God help us to believe that we are one with God, that we may be holy after the scale of God's holiness, and perfect with the perfectness of the Divine maturity. Help us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and may we never count that any height is attained whilst any height remains to be scaled. Keep us this year without sin; may we live in mutual love and in warm esteem, may no root of bitterness spring up to trouble us, may our hearts be one in the love of Christ.

Hear us, we humbly pray Thee, and send upon us a plentiful baptism of Thy Spirit; then we shall face the coming year with the courage of holy men. Amen.

CLXXVIII.

SEASONABLE MESSAGES.

"*We spend our years as a tale that is told.*"—PSALM XC. 9.

WE spend our years as a story that vanishes in paragraphs, each paragraph making the tale shorter. "We spend our years as a tale"—as a piece of work that is completed, as a number that is accounted for, as one, two, three, and on to hundreds and thousands, according to the extent of what we have to report upon. Take either of these definitions, and each will supply moral enough for any man who is serious-minded and who wishes to take stock of his doings and goings and purposes and accomplishments. "We spend our years"—no matter what "as": they go; it is a spending, it is a lessening, it is a getting-rid-of. We spend our years like a journey that cannot be taken a second time. Ah me! there is no rehearsal in life's journey; could we but run over it ever so slightly, and begin again to do it seriously, what blunders we would avoid, how many things there are which we would never think of doing a second time; but life is so sensitive, we do the deed, and leave an impression which cannot be eradicated or obliterated. Let us take care how we run, how we spend our days, how we grieve one another, how we hinder one another needlessly. How many unkind words we would not repeat, how many bitter speeches we would gladly recall! It is so sad, so fearsome—the touch of a finger can never be blotted out; the lifting of a hand sends a shudder to the heavens. How serious and even awful a thing it is to live! And what is so easy as to do wrong? what is so easy as to hinder other men? The bitter speech needs no preparation; its unholy eloquence is always at command. We can blot out nothing; we have done it. Having driven a nail into a polished surface, can we not extract it? Yes, and leave a wound behind. You can extract the nail, you cannot heal the

wound; putty it, veneer it, conceal it, the wound is still there, gaping, waiting for revenge.

Have I hindered anybody during the last year? Let me pray God that I may not repeat the hindrance, that I may not obstruct any man who is doing honest work in an honest way. Have I been repining against God? Let me cease the foolish complaint, and betake myself to meditation and to prayer. Have I left undone what I might have done? God pity me, if I have taken refuge in indolence when I ought to have been out on the hills doing the work of industry. I accuse no man; every man must accuse himself. Let us now think how we can cease to serve the devil and learn how to do well; then shall our New Year's service be a service of delight and high usefulness.

This Thursday morning service, now thirty-two and a half years old, has always been remarkable for catholicity, brotherliness, great good-humour in the name of the Lord. We have not bandied controversies, and replied to one another in bitter though clever and smart words. We have caused all evil spirits, all spirits of controversy and dissension and bitterness, to stand outside, whilst we have met here, as Roman Catholics, High Anglicans, Low Anglicans, Nonconformists of every type and degree, and we have betaken ourselves for one short hour to our prayer and to our instructions from heaven. I do not know —I am sorry for it, if it be otherwise—that one narrow-minded pitiable word has ever been spoken on a Thursday morning. Let us keep up the good idea, let us extend its application, let us be men in Christ Jesus. What say you if now we send greetings and messages and salutations to many? We used to do so in former years, why drop the goodly custom? Why not resume it, and resume it now? I take it that you are so well disposed as to be quite willing to send some New Year's card or New Year's message to many representative men. I will read you the card and ask you to send it. Our first card shall be for the King:—

"God save the King! We offer your Majesty, in

this supremely eventful year of your life, the most loyal greeting and salutation. You are not the king of one church, one set of politicians, one knot of wire-pullers, one selfish squad of place-hunters; you are the king of the whole people. Honour the people, and they will honour you. Love the whole Empire, cis-marine and trans-marine, and they will hold you in their heart, and they will be your strong tower in the time of need. Trust the people; their heart is sound at the core. God save the King!"

Let us send a message to the President of the United States:—

"England, Britain, Ireland salutes her young sister America, and rejoices that this message needs no translation. Our mother tongue is one, and the music of it floats over the world. Hail to the King-President, made a king by the confidence and love of a united nation, a king whose crown glitters with the diamonds of personal love, loyalty, and devotion. We remember the tragic fate of the good man who went before you, whose memory we honour, and whose example we would imitate. May God keep you safe from the assassin's hand, and instruct you daily in all wise policy and beneficent statesmanship. In due time may the people honour you, and honour themselves by a unanimous election to be their head and governor for the full term of the Presidency. President Roosevelt, you accepted the official responsibilities of a murdered man, and your heroic service will be long remembered and gratefully rewarded. God save the President of the United States of America!"

We must send a card to the Commonwealth of Australia:—

"As subjects of a common throne we salute you on the shores of Britain. We are separated, but not divided. In all political integrity and moral sympathy, there is no more sea. Canada and Australia helped England in the dark day of war, and England will not forget them. To all the British colonies, grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied! To the Australian Commonwealth, as the last-born of many

children, Britain sends her affectionate New Year's greetings, and says, Keep up the Christian flag! Your Commonwealth will be but sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal if you hold loosely the Bible, the Sabbath, and the sanctuary. No country can ignore God and live."

Let us come nearer home. We might almost give the message, and not merely and officially send it, for it is to the Lord Mayor of London:—

"As a Church that has been in the City of London for much more than two and a half centuries, we cannot forget our chief magistrate and his house. God have you in His strong keeping. Do not be Lord Mayor of a knot of schemers, but be Lord Mayor of London, all London, all classes in London, the rich and the poor, the prosperous and those whose way is dark. Admit the people to your halls and parlours. Remember that even Dissenters are human, and even Radicals may be but mistaken or advanced patriots. Know nothing about cliques or parties and coteries, who laugh at you, rather than with you, but be as big as the city which has made you king. Do not be afraid to go to church and chapel alike. You have never been in chapel. You would not get cold there. In both there are honest men and most worthy citizens. May your year's office be a life-long and gracious memory. Let all the people say from grateful hearts, God bless the Lord Mayor of London!"

It is a far cry from the East to the West, but I must send a fraternal and grateful message to Canon Henson. He has found out that Apostolic Succession is a figment. We all knew that. He has found out that all Christians are in the Apostolic Succession who have the Apostolic spirit. You can all be in the Apostolic Succession by cultivating the Apostolic spirit. With my whole soul I believe it. A man who speaks thus will always, during my incumbency, be welcome to this pulpit. We now extend a cordial invitation to the Canon; patronage we will always decline, but brotherhood we will always heartily welcome. Tell it not in Gath, speak

it not in the streets of Askelon, that there have been Christian ministers in London who would have shuddered at the notion of asking the late Mr. Spurgeon to their pulpits; they would have thought that something had happened, or was going to happen. It is incredible, it is unpardonable, it is infamous. I have learned that it is not necessary for Nonconformist ministers to preach in Westminster Abbey. They do preach in it; Canon Henson is in that degree, blessed be God, the foremost of Nonconformists.

To the Dean of St. Paul's, and the Venerable Archdeacon of London, I send most respectfully, if they will permit me to do so, all neighbourly good wishes, and all seasonable greetings. They are great men and great workers, and I pray the blessing of God may rest upon them during this memorable year, and that their hearts may be so enlarged as to recognise that Christianity is not a sect, but a religion; not a denomination, but the Holy Catholic Church. "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also must I bring." How great the influence of united Christendom would be! Let us not enlarge and embitter our controversies, but magnify and strengthen our many agreements. A united and loving Church would be a surprise and a terror to the devil. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." That is the test, and there is no test beside it; it is a test we can all satisfy; let us hasten to do so.

My heart longs to send a message to the great editors of the London Press, and indeed the great editors of the whole British Press. How dare I? Yet I will make the daring a privilege:—

"I claim to have a great idea of the importance of the press, and I hold that an honourable press is the greatest blessing a country can enjoy. Everybody reads the newspapers. Everybody, or nearly everybody, believes the newspapers. How can they do otherwise? The news is printed, and who dare disbelieve what is reported in black and white? But I am not thinking so much of the news as of the

leading articles. They educate the sentiment of the people; they inspire the patriotism of the nation; hey are the sworn enemies of all malversation and concealed wrong-doing. Newspapers are more than merely paying property; they are solemn and growing responsibilities. They are mightier than the military; they are as ubiquitous and penetrating as the air we breathe. The pulpit appeals to the press to help it with its almost omnipotent force to bless and save the world."

I am encouraged to send this particular message by the fact that I have just received by the courtesy of the author a volume of sermons by an editor, by the editor of a daily paper, and I am debtor to Sir Edward Russell, the editor of the *Liverpool Daily Post*, for his most vivid and most satisfactory volume of sermons. If I send him and his brethren this little message, I am sure they will not be offended.

I would God that the Christian Church were united! Never can we be united in intellectual opinion, but we can be united in affection and confidence and sympathy. Probably no man in the world preaches to more clergymen of the Established Church than I do. They rank amongst my most cordial friends and encouraging supporters. In his spiritual and pastoral capacity I reverence the Archbishop of Canterbury; I truly loved Dean Stanley and Dean Vaughan. There are others for whom I do not know what feeling I have, notably in the case of a young man who was washed and fed, schooled and equipped by Nonconformist money, and then went over to the Conformist Church. I do not object to that, other things being equal. But when his ministerial father, his own actual father, a godly, simple-minded Nonconformist minister, went to spend a day or two with the son, he said, "Father, I am very sorry that I cannot ask you to preach for me." The father, though a mild-looking man, carried a sword in a velvet covering; he meekly replied, "My son, I little thought at one time that ever I should be the father of a fool." I am on the side of the father. It is a melancholy fact that we could better spare some sons than we could spare their fathers. I would not grieve any soul that is true and loyal, but

there are some things in which your father is older than you are. Think of that! the paradox may help your memory.

"We spend our years as a tale." We are going forth; we shall be presently numbered among the dead. Let us leave a good record, let us write no lie, which, dying, we would wish to blot. Oh that our sins may be forgiven, our little envies and jealousies and sharp attacks upon one another. Oh that God would forget! He says that He will remember our sins and our iniquities no more, and as for our transgressions, He will cast them behind Him, behind the Deity!—where is that? We do, I am sure, simply and cordially wish one another a Happy New Year.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the full and overflowing blessing of the triune God, abide with us this year, making its sorrows joys, and its joys heavenly. Amen.

Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, may we ask Thee for sureness of faith? We believe at times, but we are inconstant, we are fickle, sometimes the enemy is too strong for us; he cometh in like a flood, and we cannot resist him. But if Thou wilt grant unto us of Thy great mercy the baptism of the Holy Ghost, none shall be too strong for us. No temptation shall come to us but we can resist it, and be sanctified thereafter. We bless Thee for this clear declaration of faith on the part of Simon Peter; he said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. May we attain this same conviction, may we be sustained by Thy living grace, by Thy kindly benignant presence in the soul, explaining to us the kingdom of God in all its mystery and farness of issue and meaning. May He bring us into close relation to the Lord Jesus Christ, and take of the things of the Saviour and show them unto us, fold by fold, little by little, until the vision fill the sky, and there is no more room for it in what we know as space. God be merciful unto us and bless us, and grant us release from the torment of darkness, from the trouble of doubt, from the misery of dejection. The spring is already in the air, may it be already in the soul; may our spirits be thronged with the pulses of the spring, may we be conscious of access of life, great enrichment of thought and feeling, and may we feel that the kingdom of God is round about us and within us. We have regarded it too long and too much as formal, mechanical, external, something to be conquered by the intellect: may we know it to be a spiritual presence, and may the Saviour say to us at the close of each day's lesson, The words that I speak unto you are spirit and they are life, and the meaning is not in the shell or in the letter, but in the spirit and in the soul of things. Lord, keep us this day without sin; show us the way of light and the way of truth, and may we walk therein with heartiness and devoted love. Oh, spare Thy servants, recover them from all their infirmities and disablements, and may they see life on its largest scale and in its profoundest meanings. Be with those who need courage, who are the victims of fear, who are subject to mean bondages, and grant them the opening of the prison door. Amen.

CLXXIX.

ALTERNATIVES.

"*To whom shall we go?*"—JOHN vi 68.

HE whole verse reads, "Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." And the next verse is in the same mood and temper, "And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Peter was never so great. He was once nearly as great, and that was when he was walking on the same level of thought.

"To whom shall we go?" The discourse is upon Alternatives. Who is the other man? What is the other book? If we turn our backs upon Thee, Thou Son of God, where is the life? Always ask for alternatives; always ask for a constructive side of things. There are many men who can find fault; few who can build. Better build a wall than destroy a faith. Never leave your seat until you know where you are going to sit down. Young man, never give up your situation until you know what other situation you are going to accept. Often we have to choose between difficulties; it is not all plain sailing; if we go to the right, there are six difficulties; if we go to the left, there are twenty. Sometimes we have to settle things by majorities—the very meanest law of probability and right. It is so in our own souls; conscience votes one way, imagination votes another, and will votes contrary to history, experience, and general life, as we have proved it. What, then, is to be done? Stick to this one question, and you will come out all right. "Lord, to whom shall we go?"

I want us just quietly to argue out this matter of alternatives, and see if at the end we do not all combine with glowing love to adhere to the Man of Calvary. This will be a good beginning of the year;

this will give us strength, food for the soul, and an outlook over far landscapes, and a great haven of rest far away beyond all the meads and fields and forests. I ask you to come with a quiet mind to consider the question which the Apostle Peter put, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" I like the implication of the question. If there was anybody else of superior strength we might go to him. That is quite right. If there is a better Bible than the one you have, by all means adopt it, but be sure it is better before you give up the old one. Now suppose that we make up our minds this morning that a change must be made in our theological attitude and moral standpoint. Well, to whom shall we go? what are the alternatives? what courses are open to us? Do not foolishly abandon one good thing until you know where there is a better and a stronger. What do you say? There are some four or five courses we might adopt; let us see what they are, and let us see if we really could, with the consent of our understanding and our affection, adopt any one of them.

We might live the animal life: we might be so many animals. Do you want me to labour that point, or do you instantaneously say you could not for a moment consider the alternative of mere animalism? Do not be in a great hurry about this. "Animal" is really a word which signifies a living thing; there is no baseness or foulness about the word animal. We ourselves are partly animal. But by "the animal life" is in this connection meant some low, base, vicious form of life, the trough life, the flesh life. "He that soweth unto the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." Will you consent to unman and dehumanise yourselves so far as to be mere animals? You say, "No; we should then commit self-murder, we should have to slay our best instincts, our nobler impulses, the thing that makes us men." Then you are not prepared for that sacrifice? Your answer is, "No, we are not prepared to kill nine-tenths of ourselves." Think what you are saying. The animal life: feed the flesh, gratify every passion, have a real good time of it. "But is it a real good time?" Ay, that is the question. "How long will this real good time last? When I am well, really and truly

well, when all the channels are free, and I can live the animal life in a kind of high noon and riotous hilarity, that is one thing; but I am not always well, my head aches, my heart is empty, I look wildly around for some last satisfaction. What will the animal life do for me then? No, I shall make up my mind, here and now and for ever, not to live the animal life."

What is your second alternative? "Will you live," says the tempter, "as I do?" "How do you live?" "I live the secular life." Have you ever studied secularism? It has its dogmas, its opinions, its canons and its narrow philosophy. Live the secular life, take an interest in the newspapers, in the news of the day; just rise in the morning to read what was done yesterday, and get through your time as well as you can. Or you can confine your attention solely to bread-winning, and may make it even honest bread-winning. There is a good and a right secularism, a secularism that is not spiritual, but is sober and moral and honourable—and prayerless. Well, what do you say? Will you be a secularist, a good secularist, an honourable secularist? "Well, if I have to answer you, I dream." Don't dream! "But I do dream, I have wonderful visions, I hear voices, there is a world not far away, and I am expecting soon to establish direct communication with it: can I give that up for the very best and cleanest secularism? I aspire, I speculate: shall I live wholly in the dust? I will think of it. Where is this one world for which you want me to live? Find it. There is no one-world. They who are the friends and companions of the telescope tell me that the worlds are hung in festoons, that they dance in circles, that their majestic revelry is a majestic unity. I like these ideas, they seem to ennoble me, to aspire me, and to awaken in me something that is very wonderful; perhaps, as the preachers say, it may be something divine. Sometimes I say with the poet:

> It must be so—Plato, thou reasonest well!
> Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
> This longing after immortality?
>
> . . . . .
>
> 'Tis the divinity that stirs within us.

Before I can go out with you to be a secularist I shall have to cut out of my nature all such elements, or I shall have cast them into a deep and hopeless slumber; I shall have to deny five-sixths of myself. That is a big price, and a little bargain; that is paying too much, as Richard says, for the whistle. You say it is so plain, your secularism, there is no mystery about it, you know where it begins and where it ends. Yes, but I do not know where I begin and where I end. You must bring all the terms of the equation, and not make a little problem of an infinite mystery. No, I think I shall not be a secularist, except in so far as secularism is part of Christianity, for it is.

Well, what say you to the next alternative? "I think that you might live the careless life; that is to say, let other people think about the spiritual and superstitious things, but you keep on solid ground, and you take a little enjoyment where you can get it: go out to suppers and dances and come home drunk." No, my mother forbids it, all my training goes against it, all my early impulses vote on the other side. What is the careless life? It is the life that cares "for none of these things." "There is a group of men praying—pass them, we do not care for their praying; we do not want to join them, we are bound for the race and the revel and the feast and the devil; we are happy-go-lucky boys—join us!" I think not. That might suit some sides of human nature. All that I have yet heard provides for little sections of manhood, and I want something that fills the whole vacuum, the entire abyss, the infinity of my nature. "We go out," say the careless people, "we go out at night, we sleep all day, we make as much money as we can by gambling and betting and lying, and that is a fine market; we have a large balance at the bank, and having got that large balance there, we say to our duties, Hands off! you live for us, we do not live for you." Well, I will not join you, I cannot.

All these people have been talking to you on a very low level. "Now I," says some greater tempter and more subtle seducer, "I can show you a better way than that. What I do is this, I live the purely intellectual life – a very high life; I have books, and I

read them, I go into studies of a very recondite and noble type." I like your tone better than any I have yet heard, tell me something about the purely intellectual life. "Well, we reason, we think, we calculate, we put things together." Yes, but I am not all intellect, I have a heart, I have love, affection, desire, an instinct of prayer: can you take that instinct out of me, and make it easy for me to be a pure intellectualist? I think, but I think not in some narrow and dry light, but I think in dew, there are tears in the eyes of my intellect—but I think in parables, pictures, and glowing fancies; and all these things I judge by a severe test. I do not live in fancies simply because they are fancies, I bring these fancies down to the market-place, and say, What is the value of you? and they stir my manhood, they make me a man, they call upon me to be shrewd, sagacious, to have my eyes open, to be fully awake. What do you think in the purely intellectual region? "Oh, we think about space." No man can think about space without going mad. "We think about time." No man can think about time in the true sense of the word without going mad. What is space? No man knows, no man has measured it. We have read all that the philosophers have said about time and space, and they know nothing about these quantities, and they say so, and they ask us to recognise our limitations before going into the study of these abstruse questions. But now for a moment, think, what is space? You must be very near the kingdom of heaven if you think about space; no psychologist can be far from the gates of the kingdom. John Stuart Mill surely was not far from the kingdom of heaven when he entered into all these deep speculations and mysteries of philosophy, metaphysics, and psychology. What is space? No man has the faintest idea what space is. All the mystery is not on the side of religion. There are as many mysteries outside religion as there are inside, and space is one, and time is another, and consciousness is the third, and the soul involves and defies them all. What are your people, are they nice, gracious, hospitable, sweet-blooded people, or people of the purely intellectualist school? You don't seem to know much about them. But in the degree in which

they are something less than purely intellectual, they are not intellectual at all, you have nothing to invite me to; for all these purely intellectual people are subject to like passions as ourselves, for they have their hours of riot within. What answer have they got to these clamorous passions? Do you suppose that we despise the intellectual life? Far from it; we honour it, we welcome its service, but it is alone, and it is not good for the intellect to be alone, it wants companionship; it is too remote and solitary to be what human life ought to be: come now, and see what man is, and enter into the mystery of complex, manifold-working manhood.

What else have you to offer for the Saviour? "Well," is the reply, "I live the infidel life." What is the infidel life? "'Infidel' is a word which other people throw at us, it has a bad meaning, but we take the very best meaning that we can find in the word infidel, and we adopt it, and we live the infidel life. We say, concerning any of these religious speculations, We do not want any of your churches and pulpits, and theological relationships and mysteries, we treat all these things cavalierly." But are you not unfair to yourselves in doing so? Of all the vermin that ever crawled, the meanest vermin is Agnosticism; it is a mean beggar, it is a paltry, superficial, careless thing. It says that it is the judge of all. "If there is a God—we neither affirm it nor deny it," says our Agnostic—"He cannot make Himself known, He lies beyond the region of human thought." So does space, so does time, so does man; for I say again and again, "No man hath seen God at any time, and no man hath seen himself at any time." Himself is within what he calls himself; no man hath seen himself. God is a Spirit, so is man. And with regard to this infidel of yours, what will he do for me if things should turn out badly? He will say, "You must take care of yourself." Is that all? Yes, that is all. But when I follow him all along the dark road, and there is a wolf springs out of the jungle or the forest, if the wolf should come along the snow and the ice, will he take me under his charge and preserve me? Not he; he is afraid of wolves, he does not care to be in their neighbourhood at all, and he will

leave you on the ice and the snow to be worried by the wolf, if he can only get away. I do not think I shall join that man. No. "If thou hast walked with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, if thou hast run with the horsemen, and they have been too quick for thee, what shalt thou do in the swellings of Jordan?"

I want a religion that takes the best out of all these alternatives and adds something of its own to them, and leads me into higher heights and diviner raptures of thought and imagination. Even if Christianity be a mistake, what have its believers to lose? But if it is not a mistake, what have its disbelievers to say? If Christianity is not a mistake, Oh, it told me such sweet things; it said my sins might all be forgiven, it said the dead who die in the Lord are happy walking in white, and led to living fountains of waters; it said there are twelve manner of trees along the river's channel; it said that when I closed my eyes in sleep I should see the King, and I should feel the security of the City; and if when I fall into the last sleep there is no such thing, well, I have had the comfort of it all the way along. I have been inspired by it and cheered by it, I have been made almost a hero by it, and if there is no harp, no song, no white robe, no fountain whose waters are flashing in the Celestial City, I shall never know it, I shall go into the everlasting No. But if there should be another world, and of that I am perfectly sure, what is the way into it? Where is the gate of the City? Who has the golden key that opens that portal?

Christ makes us a great offer to-day. He throws upon us the responsibility of declining it. Peter's reason for coming to Christ is sufficient and rational, "Thou hast the words of eternal life." The man who has the words is the wise man. Things perish; the Word, the Logos, remains. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God. You have been paying something for this—what is it? It is, say, a machine. Well, a machine is a word. A machine is a word? Yes, a machine is an idea, and you have paid for the idea, and if the idea could be taken out of it, your machine

would be worth nothing. "I thought men never paid for ideas." They pay for nothing else; there is nothing else in the world but ideas, there is nothing else in the world but the Word. "God said"—the second word in the Bible, "said." As for the flesh, the body, the machines, the engines, the contrivances, the patents, and the subtle inventions of man, they are no more the man himself than the glove is the hand, than the scaffold is the palace.

Benediction.

May grace, mercy, peace, the whole heart of God, be with us, a joy, a stimulus, a constant comfort, until we shall see Him who is the Saviour and the King. Amen.

PASTORAL WORDS.

WE have to do three things. First, we have to attend to the practical. Many men have been trying to make out the meaning of the twelve hundred and ninety days who have never kept one of the commandments. There are empirics and adventurers now who are publishing placards calling upon the unwary public to come and hear the meaning of the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days who never loved an enemy and never helped a friend. If we are to understand the Apocalypse we must first keep the commandments. If we would enter heaven we must keep the commandments first. Do the little which you do know. "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" O thou foolish soul, trying to make out the meaning of the twelve hundred and ninety days, and forgetting to pay the wages of the hireling, forgetting to cool the brow of fever!

Then, secondly, we are not to deny the mysterious. The Bible will always be the most mysterious of books. Why shall it be always the most mysterious of writings? Because it contains God. No man can by searching find out God; nor can he find out the Almighty unto perfection. He cannot be comprehended or weighed in a balance or set forth in words and figures. So long as the Bible tabernacles God it will be an awful sanctuary.

Then, in the third place, we have to learn patience Personally, I am waiting for God's comment upon God's words. There are many persons who have handled the Bible indiscreetly. They have been keen in finding discrepancies and contradictions; they have busied themselves about signatures; they have asked whether Moses signed this, and David signed that, and Daniel signed the other; and they have got up a *post hoc* case in favour of the Bible. On the whole they have come to think that possibly bits of it may be inspired. I have not reached any such conclusion. All I know of it in the matter of conduct, and elevation of soul, and prospect of salvation, is inspired enough for me; and as for the parts I do not understand, I am waiting, and perhaps when God comes to read it to me I shall find that not God, but the critics have been wrong.

Date Due

1723TB LBC 179
12-20-04 32180 MC

Princeton Theological Seminary Libraries
1 1012 01253 0103